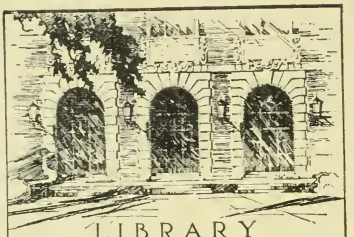

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MARGARET

AND

HER BRIDESMAIDS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "WOMAN'S DEVOTION."

"Queen Rose of the Rosebud garden of girls."—TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MARGARET

AND HER BRIDESMAIDS.

CHAPTER I.

But Philip's suspense was shorter than even he, in his eagerness, expected.

One night Mr. Beauvilliers was seized with spasms of the heart. After hours of protracted agony, during which the pale little daughter, with eyes distended from intense anxiety into supernatural brilliance and size, never left his pillow.

Philip was incessant in his attentions, and gained many a look of gratitude, if not love, from those wistful eyes. With his strong

arms he helped the ever-attentive sons to move the restless, aged sufferer ; and no demand for assistance was made, but Philip was at hand to give it. In his devoted attentions to the father, he seemed to lose sight of himself and Lotty ; and the loving daughter repaid him well for this forgetfulness of self, by her unreserved manner, and quiet appreciation of his services.

Philip tasted, for this brief period, an extraordinary feeling of content and self-respect, such as those who act from a feeling of duty and disinterestedness must ever do. But the feeling was short as it was blest.

Towards middle-day, as Mr. Beauvilliers grew calmer, and longer intervals of repose were given him, Philip could perceive that his eyes often rested on himself and Lotty, with a wistful look. A wild hope shot through Philip's heart, that now, even now, was Lotty's last filial duty to be demanded and paid. No generous determination of honour and forbearance found place in that wildly-beating heart ; she must be his, with or without her love.

"My darling, we had almost parted," said the dying man; "another struggle, such as this, and I shall be with your mother, in heaven."

She kissed his pale forehead, so lately contracted with agony.

"My pet, let me see you a wife, ere I die."

"Oh, father."

"It will make me happy, Lotty."

"I am ready, father."

Philip heard the words, and with eager looks was by her side.

"Give your father this satisfaction, Lotty, I will not claim one moment of your time while he lives."

"Father," said Lotty, unheeding him, "what is a wife's duty?"

"Do your duty, my darling, but half as well to your husband as you have done to your father, and no wife will match you."

"What is my duty, father?"

"To be an helpmeet to him, to be his

companion, friend, adviser. All this I know you can do, Lotty."

"All this I can do, father."

"Then send your brothers here."

Mr. Beauvilliers explained his ardent wishes to his children around him.

"I think I should die happier if I took with me to her mother, the assurance that she is a wife, and settled. You, my sons, are all married, and, I doubt not, would each give your Lotty a home; but I should like to tell her mother she is about to make a worthy man happy, even as her mother made me."

A low murmur of approbation greeted his words.

"Then make preparation for my Lotty's marriage, by my bed-side. Tell our kind kinsmen, that 'the girl's' marriage is not celebrated as they would, I know, wish, but God wills it otherwise. They must pray for her happiness. And Philip—" here Philip advanced, his usually grave face and serious eyes lightened up with a joy and eagerness, that only confirmed Mr. Beauvilliers still more

in the execution of his wishes. He looked long and earnestly at him, then, apparently well content, he said slowly: "My child is a Beauvilliers, truthful, simple, just, and affectionate. Restore her to me unchanged."

"On my soul, I promise," said Philip.

As if well content, Mr. Beauvilliers fell into a calm slumber, his hand, so vast, yet so shrivelled and helpless, holding the little white one of the loving daughter. He heeded not that, unlike its usual warm, life-like touch, it was now passive and cold. Motionless she sat on his pillow, so still, so calm, so apparently bereft of life and feeling, she might have been a statue.

And the contrast was all the greater, from the hurried preparations that were going on in other parts of the house.

Some brothers went in search of the clergyman, others, with Philip, went for the special license; and such was the haste and dispatch with which all worked, to fulfil their dying chief's last wishes, that by the evening, every thing was in readiness for the marriage.

In the silent presence of many Beauvillians, by the quiet bed-side of her dying father, Philip took that little cold hand in his, and demanded it in marriage ; she neither looked at him nor spoke. Slowly she obeyed her father's whispered wish: "Go, my best one;" and leaving her place on the pillow, stood by Philip's side, with her eyes still resting on her father. She started as she heard Philip's distinct, and, as it seemed, triumphant voice, as he made the responses. She spoke hers in a voice like low, sighing music ; and while "honour" and "obey" were words distinctly heard, the clergyman bent his head in vain for the one syllable—"love." He paused, but Philip impatiently beckoned him to go on ; and perhaps impelled by the extraordinary circumstances under which the marriage was celebrated, to do so, he proceeded with the ceremony.

As the last words were spoken, before Philip had time to claim her as his wife, Lotty was again seated on her father's pillow ; the hand so lately dead and cold in his, was once more nestled in her father's dying clasp.

And thus matters went on for three weeks. During that time she was never absent from her father's pillow more than five minutes at a time. Philip visibly gained ground in her estimation, by the devotedness of his attentions, and his apparent forgetfulness of any claim he might now have upon her. She seemed to be still as free as if no marriage had taken place.

But when the last words were said, when the last look was given, and the last sigh received, the wild burst of grief that broke from Lotty's heart, appalled him at first. The depth, the strength, the fervour of her attachments, opened to him the true nature of her character, and he rejoiced in it. "She shall love me in this manner; I should die content, to be thus mourned."

Many weeks elapsed before their beloved and idolized girl could be said to recover her father's death. And if anything could have reconciled them more than another to her hasty marriage, it was to see the gentle care with which Philip attended her, the de-

votion he paid to her slightest wish. He did it, it is true, from the purest feelings of love. Nevertheless, there was an old black spot in his heart never yet rooted out, that made him say, time upon time, to himself, "She shall reward me for all this forbearance hereafter." And perhaps he was not so skilful in veiling his true feelings to Lotty, as he was to her kinsmen; for she showed no increase of affection during this period of sorrow.

After a time, it was agreed that, perhaps, a change to her new home, and return to the society of her beloved Margaret, would prove beneficial in every way to her health and spirits.

The considerate Beauvillians refrained from trying her shattered nerves, by coming to bid her a personal farewell: but the trees and bushes gave shelter to affectionate eyes, watching the departure of the beloved one. Her eldest brother lifted her little light, faded form into the carriage; Philip took his place by her side; she neither spoke nor moved, until they came to the lodge. There a last group of anxious kinsmen were assembled. Lotty raised

her head, the large tears rolled down her face; she had passed the gates, and with a passionate sob, she sunk back in the carriage.

Philip drew down the blinds, and wrapping her up closely, he folded one arm round her, then raising her face to his, kissed her once or twice, saying, softly: "My wife!"—the little head laid itself down on his shoulder, and after a few convulsions of grief, the sobs grew less, the tumultuous heavings stopped, the heavy eyes closed, and Lotty slept, like a little weary, worn-out child.

But Philip could hear the beatings of his own heart, as he thought that now this idolized little being was really his own, that he held the "little wild, wicked thing" in his close embrace, had at last called her his wife, and touched her soft cheek with his lips.

CHAPTER II.

Pro.'s marriage had been celebrated with all the ceremony and etiquette Lady Katherine could desire; though necessarily in a quiet way, because of Mr. Beauvilliers' precarious health, and Sir Thomas Montagu's demise.

The day was chiefly remarkable from other weddings, by the fact, that as the happy pair drove from the door, Pru. fell into hysterics.

Lady Katherine sat down and looked at her, in bewildered amazement. A sort of notion was running through her head, that the gentle Pru. was suddenly possessed by an evil spirit. She gazed at her in awe, and a remembrance of the old-fashioned picture,

often to be seen in ancient Bibles, of the herd of swine, where numerous little black demons are discovered dancing out of the porcine mouths, beset her with a qualm of fear.

Luckily, ladies' maids are so educated, as to be able to take out a diploma in the matter of hysterics; and two or three of them having administered the usual amount of pattings, scoldings, coaxings, poor dears, and sal volatile, to Lady Katherine's infinite relief, no further catastrophe happened, but that Pru. was put sobbing to bed.

Everybody was settled in his and her proper home. Margaret and Harold at Court Leigh; Lady Katherine and the hysterical Pru. at Roseligh; Millicent and Gerald at the Rectory.

The first smile that Philip saw on his wife's face since the death of her father, was brought into being by Pru. She saw the carriage pass the window, on its way to Court Leigh, whither Philip was taking Lotty for a drive; and, in the excitement of her feelings, she ran out, just as she was, without bonnet or shawl and throwing her arms round Lotty, as she

descended from the carriage, exclaimed, "Dear, dearest, darling Lotty! I am so glad to see you!"

Lotty duly appreciated the warm affection displayed, in a manner unprecedented on the part of a Miss Leigh; and while she returned the embrace, had almost her usual manner; especially when, picking up Pru.'s knotting, it was discovered that though the knotting was there, the other end, all unwound, was to be traced all through the garden, losing itself in the window, out of which Pru. had sprung with such loving activity.

Margaret and Millicent could have wept over the change in their little wild Lotty; but the least show of feeling on their part, only made the lips turn white as the cheek, though no word passed them, no tear of relief dimmed her bright eyes. They saw she was struggling with her sorrow, but with a resolute heart to conquer it; and only did they show their perception of her efforts, by the ready love and affection with which they promoted all sorts of schemes and pleasures to amuse her. Philip

seemed to have no pleasure, no business, no thought, independent of Lotty; and appeared to live, but to administer to her wishes.

From the first week after their arrival, they were visited now and then by one of Lotty's brothers or uncles; who, long as the journey was from Gloucester to Cheshire, never said why they came, or what made them go away the next day. Philip's hot temper was beginning to chafe, under what he considered a surveillance. Lotty may have perceived it, for she begged the last one who came, to entreat the others to be at ease about her. She would write constantly; she was strong enough now to ride and walk about. They could see that she was gradually, though slowly, recovering her health and spirits; and the good Beauvillians, thinking it but natural that Philip should be certified he had not married the whole family, took leave of their Lotty, and left her, in the confidence of their fine natures, to the husband her father had selected for her.

But Lotty was to write; oh, yes, Lotty must not let one week pass without writing. And

her nurse, who had lived with her from the hour of her birth, now her maid, was to write too. And so Lotty began her new life.

Harold was changed, and very much for the better, too, in all, excepting one thing, and that the most important — his dislike to Gerald Herbert increased. He went to church only to scoff and rail at the preacher; only to murmur and find fault with what he called the "canting parson."

Margaret would endeavour, in her gentle, persuasive way, to point out the beautiful truths, the lofty hopes, held out in Gerald's eloquent words; the rigid self-denial of his life, the uncompromising zeal with which he performed his duty; the truth with which he acted his favourite text, namely, "I am willing to spend and be spent for you." With the perverseness of a mind that would persist in its wrong judgment, he would not even give Gerald credit for what he deserved.

A poor, simple-hearted curate, with plain words and homely truths, was more suited to Harold's state of mind, than the gifted, almost

inspired Gerald; and for this reason: Harold's heart, as regarded religion, was as a little child's; the "strong meat" he could not yet bear, the "milk of the word" was alone fit for him at present. And being unable to bring his gaze up to the level of Gerald's heaven-seeing eyes, he took refuge, as many men have done before him, in despising what he could not understand.

Gerald, on his part, had forgotten, that "he must be all things to all men, if by any means he might save some." Schooled and exercised as his own heart had become, he no longer remembered the weaknesses of man's nature, but deemed a duty undone, a fault committed, as so many commandments broken or forgotten; and "the eye must be plucked out, the hand cut off," ere the sin could be forgiven. No latitude was allowed, no fault considered venial, no excuse was deemed valid. Perfection was his aim; and this to a man whose education had been based on no religious principles; this to a congregation who were ignorant of the commonest duties of Chris-

tianity. No wonder that the rector was more feared than loved, more wondered at than respected.

It was different with his wife. She taught the holy truths that her husband wished to force on his people by example; and a word from the gentle lips of his wife, proved often more persuasive than Gerald's most eloquent appeal. Neither Harold nor his people were ready or fitted to strike at once into the high path of duty pointed out by their rector.

Lady Katherine, though considered a religious woman, had lived for most part of her life in those times where a regular attendance at church, spending the Sunday in reading sermons and good books, taking the Holy Sacrament twice a year with the due amount of preparation required by the little manual called "The Week's Preparation," caused her to be considered very devout. And, as we have before intimated, she was not naturally gifted with sufficient perception, to distinguish a habit from a duty. She had been called a religious woman; she considered herself one.

To be told she was a sinner, poor, naked, blind and helpless, was repugnant to her feelings, contrary to every idea she had been indulging in for nearly seventy years. So she joined with her son, in disliking, not to say despising, their new rector.

Margaret and Millicent patiently hoped for the best; trying, in their loving woman's nature, to soften all ruggedness, all bushes and briars in the paths of their lords.

Harold really exerted himself. At first, matters went on very well. It was agreeable to go to different farm-houses with his agent; order them instantly to be repaired; have the heartfelt thanks of the tenants, and the tearful blessings of their wives, poured upon his doings. Also, he was interested in plans that were submitted to him, and the weather not being as yet very hot, he rode about and watched their progress in execution; and was pleased with himself, when he suggested improvements, and they were deemed worthy to be carried out. Tiresome as Price had been, yet as Sir Harold now seemed determined to

look after his own affairs, no more impediments were thrown in his way. All seemed to go on delightfully smooth and pleasant. Basil was duly informed by the self-pleased Harold, and the delighted Margaret, of the happy state of affairs; and was besought to come and see the effects caused originally by him alone, and to assist with his further advice.

But Basil knew the besetting sin of the Leighs. Harold must reform himself by sure and slow degrees. Dependent upon another such as Basil, the cure would never be complete.

That he had some annoyances to contend with, Margaret expected; and though Harold fretted and fumed about them, they were not of so grave a nature as to cause any serious interruption. So summer came on apace, and with the green leaves came fairer hopes.

CHAPTER III.

Lotty was once more herself, and Philip, as he watched her playing like a very child with her great Bear, wondered at the intense love that burnt in his heart for that little wild thing. And did she love him? This question he asked himself night and day, day and night, hour by hour, and he could not answer it.

Happy, frank, and unrestrained as ever, the butterflies of the hour seemed not more free from care, more intent upon being satisfied with whatever flower came in her way.

Fond terms of endearment were showered upon Bear, caresses and loving words to Margaret, merry, mirthful ones to Pru. What to

him? He knew not, he could not tell, he could not define her feelings towards him.

He had but to express a wish; she said, "Yes, Philip," and it was done. Did she intend riding, and he said he wished to walk, she would come down in her walking dress, having taken off habit and hat on the instant. Did he but hint at an alteration in house, garden, her dress, her words; even though he might be hardly conscious that he had said it, yet surely was it done.

But what mattered all this to him; what mattered it, that he had secured the prize he took at any price, if, after all, he did not gain her love? The old sin was rising fast in his heart, but in a new form. The long-concealed, though still flourishing, plant of discontent and envy, that he had so nourished and fostered from his youth, and which had apparently died when all food was taken from it, was beginning to sprout again. He envied Bear the fond words bestowed on him; he hated to see Lotty going about with Margaret's arm round her. He wanted no one to

have part or parcel, or aught to do with his property. She might not love him, (he had braved the chances of marrying her without), but she was his—his property, goods, chattels. If she would not love him, she should not love anything else. But he meant to make her love him. He was but waiting an opportunity to begin his operations.

Philip Leigh resembled his cousin in the disregard, not to say indifference, he paid to religious duties. This is often the case with men whose vigorous intellect, and quick talents, smother the less striking qualities of plain sense and calm judgment. Whatever his inquiring mind had led him to study and examine on this vital subject, had hitherto rather tended to confirm his scepticism. A little more (nought but the pitying love of some ministering angel, sent by an all-merciful God, kept one little spot half awe, half fear, in his heart), and Philip Leigh would have been an infidel. He very seldom went to church; once or twice he had tried to prevent Lotty going there either. But she, so quick

to hear his least wish, so observant of all his hints, took no heed on this subject. So he thought he would express himself more strongly.

"Lotty, I want you to stay at home to-day, to read to me," said he.

"I am going to church, Philip."

"But do you not hear me say, I wish you to stay at home?"

"Then you must wish still, Philip, for that is all you can have now. When I return, I shall be ready to do what you require."

"Come, Lotty, don't be childish. I am not in the habit of asking, to be refused."

"Do you never go to church, Philip?"

"Very seldom, little one. I do not see what men, in the full possession of their wits and faculties, want to gain by going there."

"They should go to thank God for that gift of their wits and faculties."

"Pooh, Lotty! I was born with mine."

"You believe in no God, then, Philip?"

"I am afraid I am a sad, irreligious dog,

sweet Lotty," said he, half smiling, to think he had gained his end.

She looked at him with a strange expression of pity in her face.

"I go then," she said, "to pray for you," and left him; taking the path to church.

He was too much surprised, not to say ashamed, to stop her; but he determined to be revenged. When she returned, she found him in the same place she had parted from him. In her usual gay and innocent manner, she came up to Philip as if nothing had occurred, showing him Bear all wound round with a wreath of wild briony; she gave Philip some violets, and then said, "Now, where is the book?"

For a moment there were in Philip's mind better thoughts, and a conviction that if he wished to gain the love of this little precious heart, it must be by actions and thoughts as pure and bright as her own truthful eyes. But no, Philip's heart was not capable of good and noble thoughts—he must be revenged; and if she would not love, she should fear him.

So he said: "No, I thank you. I wish for no forced duties."

"Very well," she said, without appearing to see his taunt. "Then, Bear, come with me to get some more violets."

Philip grew pale with anger, and he said in a loud voice: "Stay where you are."

She took off her bonnet and shawl, and, without looking at Philip, sat down with a book.

"Do you not see that you have annoyed me?" said he, at last.

"Yes, I see it."

"Then why do you not ask my forgiveness?"

"I request your forgiveness."

Philip bit his lips with anger, but knew not what to say.

"Ah! Philip," said Lotty at last, in a cordial, happy manner, "we are like two babies; we shall never earn the flitch of bacon Margaret has promised us." Then assuming a more serious look, with a quiet, dignified manner, she continued, "I have much for which to thank God; much for

which I have to pray. Sickness or death shall alone prevent my going to church. Let us have no further dispute on such a subject." She put her hand into his, almost the first unsolicited mark of familiarity she had ever bestowed on him.

Madly as he loved her, irresistible as seemed the inclination to clasp her in his arms, and utter the burning cry of his heart, "Love me, Lotty, oh! love me!" he was foiled, and could not forgive her. He said coldly: "Your first duty is to your husband."

She turned away, he could see a little shadow of disdain in her eyes, but she did not answer.

No more was said that evening; but as she was preparing to go to Court Leigh in the morning, he said: "You are always at Court Leigh! cannot you stay at home one day?"

"We are both engaged there, Philip, to meet my old school-fellows, Carry and Flory."

"I do not choose to go."

"Very well."

Lotty took off her bonnet, wrote a note, and rang the bell.

"Let me see that note," said he. He read it; and his heart smote him as he read the simple excuse to Margaret, which contained no implication of himself, and was written in her lively, happy spirit, rendering it all most natural their not going.

"You may say we will come to-morrow."

"Thank you, Philip."

If Philip thought he had punished her, he could not be certain of it; as Lotty was her usual happy self all day.

He was not sorry that Margaret came, in spite of the excuse, and carried them both off by force to dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

Caroline and Florence appeared before their school-fellows, as they did to them, in very different circumstances to those in which they parted.

Margaret and Caroline were mothers; Millicent looking forward to such an event. Florence and Lotty, brides.

Caroline's husband was a good-tempered, fox-hunting, rather vulgar 'squire, of moderate fortune, who loved his pretty wife next to his horses and dogs, and thought her highly flattered by the compliment. She seemed equally pleased at her position in her lord's affections, for her own were almost wholly

absorbed in a pale, flabby species of baby, with tottering head, weak neck, and watery, blue eyes, of large dimensions.

What this baby ate and drank, when it slept, and how it slept, when it went out, and where it went, with various other interesting items, formed the sole food for her thoughts, the sole exercise for her tongue.

When Lotty brought down, after dinner, Margaret's magnificent boy, his little figure so erect, and his beautiful face so blooming and intelligent; he formed a sufficient contrast to the little stranger as to call forth an abrupt remark from the young 'squire, rather to the detriment of his own child.

"Ah!" said Margaret, quickly, seeing the flush of mortified anger rising on the young mother's cheek: "my boy is almost a year old."

"And pray, Sir Harold," continued the 'squire, whose name was Royston, "have you had any peace since his birth?"

"I don't see the little fellow very often," said Harold; "and I never hear him, so I

suppose I must consider myself fortunate; and that he is a very good child, inheriting all his father's amiability."

"He is of a more enterprizing and active nature than you, Harold," said Lotty; "for he took incredible pains to scramble up on to a chair, a day or two ago."

"That's just what my baby does," said Mrs. Royston, eagerly; "he feels his feet already, little pet!"

"I conclude he is feeling something," said the hard-hearted father, "otherwise how can you account for those extraordinary faces?"

"Nonsense! Robert," said Mrs. Royston, angrily; "that's only a way babies have of smiling."

"It seems to express the reverse, to my thinking," retorted he.

At that moment little Harold's wondering and wandering eyes, that had been travelling from face to face, among the new comers, caught a glimpse of his father. A little radiant gleam of smiles shone over his whole face, he stretched out his arms, and quivering

in every limb with delighted impatience, he expressed, in baby language, his wish to go to him.

"Ah! now, that I call an unmistakable smile," said the pertinacious 'squire. "I wonder, Carry, if your baby will ever be as nice a one as that?"

"I am sure I don't know what you mean, and I don't care either. If my little darling has an unnatural father, it is his mother's duty to make it up to him." And slight symptoms of a disposition to weep afflicted Mrs. Royston.

"I should think," said Margaret, with a voice like angels' music, "that when your boy is the age of mine, Mr. Royston, you will be quite satisfied with him."

"He doesn't deserve to have such a child," was muttered by the injured mother.

"It is a great disadvantage," continued Margaret, hoping to drown the last sentence, "for so young a child as yours to be seen by the side of a young John Bull, such as my boy." As he heard his mother's voice, the young John Bull called out her name, and,

with all his child's love beaming in his face, he held out the strawberry his father had given him for her acceptance.

Mrs. Royston retired to the drawing-room with the other ladies, in an aggrieved state; and while she poured forth into Margaret's ear all she endured from Mr. Royston's unfeeling conduct, mixed up with an account of her baby's extraordinary mental and bodily accomplishments, Florence was favouring Lotty with a private view of her trousseau. Her husband was a mild sort of fair, soft young man, without any very particular ideas upon any subject, which was fortunate, as Florence had decision enough for both. He was the junior scion, as well as junior clerk, of a large banking establishment, so that while Florence spread out her wedding-veil, looking at it with loving and admiring eyes, sometimes shaking it up into a fall of lace, then spreading it out, after the most approved milliner fashion, she told Lotty of all their expectations.

"We are to have £800 a-year now, my dear, and little enough too, considering the

house Frederick works in. Rich! my dear, rich does not express what they are. Literally, they might eat gold. I went one day into the Bank with Frederick, just for curiosity; and, la! my dear, the bank-notes would have covered this floor, and heaps of gold lying about, just as if nobody cared. But the clerks stared so, I could not look much, I was so afraid Frederick would see them, and be angry. I had on a purple merino, and a white chip bonnet, with poppies and corn trimmings—most elegant, I can assure you, my dear Lotty. But, I forget, you never cared much about dress."

"No, not much," returned Lotty.

"Then it is time you should, my dear. Now you are a married woman, you must study dress, to please your husband. A man always likes to hear that his wife is the best-dressed woman going, and I shall make a point of indulging Frederick in this wish. I shall consider it my duty."

"I hope he will be duly grateful," said Lotty.

"Oh, yes! that he will, or I'll know the

reason why. You see, I have only two 'moirés' at present; mamma would not give me another, but I will have a black one, I am determined. All married women wear black. By the by, my dear, what a handsome man your husband is! Now, I should like to have a dress just the colour of his hair—a rich black. I wonder how he came to fancy a child like you?"

"So do I," said Lotty, quietly.

"Is he kind to you, my dear? He did not look to me very good-tempered; he seemed to me as if something had put him out."

"Perhaps he was thinking it was a pity he had not seen you before he married me."

"Ah, ha! very likely; but you were always a good little soul, Lotty: and Frederick says, never, not even at the Opera, with all that sea of lovely faces round him (that's his own expression, mind, and very pretty too), did he see one to compare to mine."

"You are very much improved, Flory, since you left school."

"Ah, my dear! I must allow dress makes

a vast difference: one can dress so sweetly now, there are such loves of things that would almost make a negress pretty: look, now, at this head-dress—By the by, did you notice Carry's to-day, at dinner—put on all on one side? I dare say, she was wishing her baby good-bye ere she parted from the cherub to come down to dinner, and never looked at herself in the glass. Now, if I had fifty babies, I should think it just as necessary to pay every attention to my personal appearance as if I had none."

"Rather more so, I imagine," said Lotty.

"Exactly; now you are reasonable, Lotty; but as for Carry, she is baby-mad. And did you ever see such a dowdy as she has become? Two or three more children, and I don't know what she will look like. But that's the worst of you little people," continued Flory, looking with satisfaction from her own tall, rather angular form, to Lotty's *petite* one.

"It's very shocking, certainly," said Lotty.

"But, my dear, you have not half admired this white muslin, with the gold corn. And

now, you see, having shewn you all my things, it is but fair that I should see your trousseau."

"I did not have one," said Lotty.

"Not a trousseau!"

"No," said Lotty, composedly.

"Good heavens, child! Then, how were you married?"

"Under very painful circumstances, Flory; so we will say no more about it."

"Yes; I know, my dear, that you had to be married in a hurry, and by your father's bed-side. I remember hearing how your uncles, and brothers, and Mr. Leigh were rushing everywhere to get the special licence; and I was thinking myself I should like to be married that way too. But, of course, married by special licence, I concluded you would have diamonds, or pearls at least, and Mechlin lace, and all the things proper."

"No," said Lotty. The remembrance of the scene sent a rush of mournful regrets to her heart; but she knew her present auditor was wholly incapable of understanding that deep well of never-dying sorrow, so she con-

tinued, in her usual unconcerned voice: "I was married in my old brown merino frock, that you have often seen at school."

"My heavens! and married by special licence!" exclaimed Flory. "Poor soul! But surely you had a trousseau provided for you afterwards?"

"Yes; of black, with crape and broad hems."

"Dear me, how shocking! Are you superstitious, my dear?—for, if it was me, I should not know a moment's happiness: I should feel perfectly certain that the match would turn out a miserable one."

"If it does," said Lotty, "I will come to you for consolation."

"Do, my dear, you shall have my best efforts; and, in the meantime, take this advice: don't pin your happiness on any man; I told Frederick from the very first I was no weak fool, ready to give in on any occasion; but I had likings and dislikings, whims and weaknesses, like all other mortals, and, like all other mortals, I was entitled to my share of

indulgences. Now, look at Margaret; I believe she quite fears Sir Harold, and she has next to no power over him. By the by, how fat and bloated he has grown—and such an elegant young man as he was, with such a fine dark eye—"

"I always thought he had two," interrupted Lotty.

"Of course he has; you are as matter-of-fact as ever, you little, odd thing! Do you remember how mad Augusta was when she discovered that it was Margaret he wanted to marry, not her? Ha, ha! how we laughed, Carry and I, it was such good fun her being so disappointed. Then, what do you think? —she wrote and told us she was going to be married to your husband. By the by, Lotty, she is most bitter against you."

"She is coming here next week," said Lotty.

"I am delighted to hear it. I shall shew her all my things: she really has good taste in dress; and, besides, how she will envy me! It has always seemed strange to me that she does not marry."

"She is very handsome," said Lotty.

"Yes; and very striking too; but she is such a shocking flirt—she goes such lengths. Really mamma was about to order me to have nothing further to say to her, she lost her character so completely last summer at Ryde. She is a pretty good age now; the oldest of us all, save Millicent. She has a shocking temper, and agrees with none of her family: they despise her, and she hates them. But I must show you my pink *glacè*, with silver trimmings, and such a spray, my dear, for the hair."

But Lotty, declaring that coffee would be announced, departed down stairs, and concluding, from Margaret's look, that she had had a dose of talk similar to her own in interest, called upon her to come and sing. Their sweet voices rose and fell in rich harmony, beguiling the gentlemen from the dining-room.

"My dear," whispered Florence to Lotty, "I mean to devote myself to studying your husband's character for an hour; I am a great judge of such things, and rarely mistaken; and being such a little, young, inexperienced

thing, I may be able to afford you some good and sensible advice, as to his management."

"I feel very grateful," said Lotty, smiling.

"Ah! depend upon it, my dear, I shall be able to do you a great deal of good."

Florence made only one discovery in the hour that she kindly devoted to the study of Philip's character. He never willingly withdrew his eyes from Lotty's face, and he never lost a single word that fell from her lips; nevertheless, he did not speak to her, and he was as reasonably entertaining as most men appeared to Florence.

So she forgot her intention to pry into his secret soul, and lost herself in conjectures as to the motives of the ward and watch he seemed to hold over his wife.

Philip appeared quite satisfied, whether she conversed or remained silent, so she had ample time to settle all the pro's and con's to her mind.

"He is jealous, of course he is, and reasonable enough too, considering he has married such a child. I shall give her a hint; those

sorts of dark, sanguine-looking men are always jealous, and have furious tempers when roused. With his brows knit, and his eyes flashing, he looks really now as if he would no more mind committing a murder, than I do eating this bread and butter. It will be my duty to warn the child. Heavens! she speaks to Frederick, and the man glares at him. Jupiter Ammon! what a countenance. I must go and release Frederick from his awful, and to him, unknown situation."

CHAPTER V.

"I DO not like those people now at the Court," said Philip to Lotty, on the morrow after this party.

"That is very likely, Philip," said Lotty, as she sat busily tying his fishing-flies.

"One is a vain, selfish, opiniated female, tied to as weak a fool as 'twas ever my lot to encounter; and the other ought to be called 'Gamp,' and I need say no more. Associating with such creatures, would make a monkey gape."

Lotty laughed and said,—"Yet each of them rejoice in a few virtues, that some of us may want. It is rare to find a person wholly devoid of amiable qualities."

"You are a philosopher, Lotty."

"I do not think I am so much of a philosopher as a person who can easily accommodate herself to the company she is in. My two school-fellows rather amuse me, they have turned out so exactly what I expected they would."

"As you are such a judge of character, let me hear your opinion of mine."

"It is not a favourable one, Philip."

"As how?" said Philip, his brows knitting.

"Because you would marry me, without caring for my affection."

"Lotty, Lotty, that is false! you know 'twas my ardent, infatuated love for you, that made me secure you at any price."

"You loved yourself, Philip, because if you had loved me, you would not have taken advantage of my dying father's wishes, (which you saw, were commands to me,) to make me marry you, without having that love for you which I ought to have felt."

"You speak strangely, Lotty, to one who is your husband."

"I do it advisedly, Philip, because it is my firm purpose to fulfil my father's wishes, to love you if I can; and I think you must know my character sufficiently well by this time, to be aware, that, with or without, I shall perform my duty as your wife, Will you trust and believe in me, that all this I mean to do?"

"I cannot, at present, see the drift of what you mean, Lotty; you are my wife, as such I command your love and obedience."

"My obedience you have, Philip; my love has to be gained. Remember, it was your own doing, marrying me without."

"Am I so very disagreeable, personally and mentally," said Philip, hotly, "that I am to sue to a child like you, for what no woman ever denied me before, did I take the trouble to demand it?"

"My love is worth the trouble of gaining it," said Lotty, looking up with an expression in her face, so lovely and yet so exalted, that Philip felt he could have knelt at her feet, and sued as the humblest slave, for one word of love. As it was, he said, with faltering voice,

"Love me, Lotty, for there is nothing on earth that I covet so much."

"I wish to do so, Philip, but you will not permit me. Can you not be generous, and allow something for the peculiar circumstances under which I was made to marry you, being myself of a nature neither pliable nor yielding? can you not act a noble part of forbearance and patience, and win my love through gratitude for such conduct?"

"I have been doing so, child."

"Yes, and I was becoming contented and happy."

"In what way have I changed, then?"

"You have within your heart, Philip, some ill weed, that chokes every fine and noble feeling. Why need you seek revenge for what you know I regret as much as yourself? By resenting the want of my love, can you make it spring? Trust me, be frank and generous with me. I know not my own heart, if it remains insensible to high and noble actions, but it closes when—" she paused.

"What, Lotty? you can have nothing less

bitter to say to me than you have done: then what, I ask?"

"You know, Philip, better than I can explain, and it is to warn you that I have spoken, as you think, thus bitterly."

"I have not now to learn how to manage a woman," said Philip, fiercely, "especially—" He was about to add, "one a child such as you are;" but a remembrance of her escape from him the day he first told her how he loved her; a look at her now, with the clear eyes looking into his with truth and determination dwelling there, told him he dealt with no child, with no ordinary woman.

But his pride of manhood, his lofty sense of his own intellect and powers, his firm persuasion that no woman lived who could brave his will and yet not suffer for it, all, all, bore down the love he felt for the first time in his life, and felt so strongly, making him think it were better to lose the heaven he panted for, in the possession of her love, than gain it by any other means than as he willed it.

"Come, child, you have fooled it enough," he said, kissing her forehead. "Get on your things, and come with me to the brook, and pray let me hear no more nonsense from my little Lotty's lips. The heroics would be bad enough to bear in a woman twice your age, much more my child wife."

Lotty obeyed, and as he watched her playful sports with her Bear, while the trout, unheeded by him, took the tempting fly, he said to himself: "Little, silly thing! as if I, a man of the world, with twice her experience, had to be taught how to woo. She shall love me, that I have sworn to myself. As she says herself, her love is worth some trouble, and having often railed at matrimonial mawkishness, I must not grumble if it does cost me some trouble to break her in. When I have conquered her, when I have brought her to my arms with penitence and beseeching love, then, and then only, shall she see that the earth contains not a thing I prize so much as her very shadow, wild, wicked, little thing! No monarch, conqueror of worlds, ever tri-

umphed as I shall; no gambler ever played for such a stake."

"Ah, Philip," said Lotty, "that must be a fine fellow, you have had him on the last ten minutes."

In some confusion, Philip drew in a little trout, about the length of his finger, whose agonized attempts to escape from the fatal hook had been quite unheeded until that moment.

Luckily Lotty was summoned to the house by visitors.

It was Florence and her husband.

"Well! my dear, Frederick and I have come over to see your abode, and upon my word 'tis vastly pretty, quite a bijou of a place. This clematis puts me in mind of those beautiful wreaths that Forster and Duncan sent us for the ball, after Margaret's marriage. They are to the full as pretty as if artificial, are they not, Fred? Well, my dear, and where is my Lord Turk? the servant said fishing, so I suppose we shall not be favoured with a view of his highness."

"I cannot say, indeed," said Lotty; "but if you want particularly to see him, we will walk down to the brook."

"Oh, no, my dear, we don't care, do we, Frederick? we just came over to see you—I am not quite happy about you, my dear, such a child as you are, married to that tall, dark, morose man, handsome as he is. Yet, you know, 'handsome is, as handsome does,' is it not, Fred? and we both think he is horridly jealous, and of a frightful temper. Don't we, Fred?"

"That is your opinion," began Mr. Bankes.

"And yours too," said Florence decidedly.

"Why, yes, after what you told me last night, Flo, I am decidedly of your opinion," returned Mr. Bankes.

"There now, you see, Lotty, so I thought we could not do better than just come over and warn you."

"Thank you," said Lotty.

"You may well say that, my dear, for it is not every one whom I care to trouble my head about. Never was any one less given to

meddle or make; but in your case, I should be neglecting a positive duty, if I did not tell you my suspicions, and give you some advice. So now, Frederick, you stay here, Lotty has got something to show me up stairs; and when we have finished our confab, let us find you here."

"But the dog?" said Fred, looking dismally at Bear.

"Oh! do not fear him," said Lotty; "see! I will make him like you." And touching Mr. Bankes on the shoulder, she continued: "Look, Bear! friend, Lotty's friend; take care of him."

"My heavens! don't," exclaimed Florence; "if your husband caught you doing that to Frederick, he'd cut him up into mincemeat."

"Oh! don't, Mrs. Leigh," said the alarmed Mr. Bankes, withdrawing from Lotty's touch.

Lotty laughed, saying: "I am afraid the mischief is past mending, however, I will be chopped up for you."

A shadow withdrew from the window, unobserved by all but herself.

"Well! my dear, as I was saying this morning to Margaret," said Flory, on their way up stairs, "it is quite a delight to me to see you all once more. But how subdued she is, and before I'd run after a husband as she does after Sir Harold, I'd be corked up in a bottle. He does not seem to me to be able to do a thing without her. Margaret here, Margaret there, Margaret everywhere. A boots at an hotel is better off."

"Margaret likes it; besides, Sir Harold is at present undergoing a great deal of trouble and annoyance about his estates, and Margaret is glad to assist him, as he is not accustomed to it."

"Accustomed to it! no, I should think not. My heavens! what a row he made at breakfast this morning, about some unlucky fellow called Price. I must say Margaret calmed him down, and got it all satisfactorily settled. But to lead such a life; why, she can have no peace to herself, no time to read a nice gossipy novel, or try on a new dress, or have her hair done up in twenty different styles, to see which is

most becoming. Ah! my dear, delighted as I was to see them, they are a very unhappy couple; and though I make a point of never meddling or making, I shall be only doing my duty to warn Margaret."

"Of what, Flo.?" said Lotty.

"Why I,—that is,—I shall tell her what I think."

"Perhaps she knows it already."

"But, my dear, bystanders are bystanders, and they see more than most people. Margaret wants a little advice, and I shall make a point of giving her some. Well! dear, your house is a picture of neatness and comfort, and I hope you will be able always to keep it so. Ah! here is your old nurse. How do you do, nurse? I think your mistress is a lucky girl to get such a nice husband, and such a pretty house, before she was seventeen."

"I should have been glad to see her still Miss Beauvilliers, for a few years yet, Mrs. Bankes," said the nurse; and laying her hand fondly on the dear, pretty, curls, she continued:

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"I don't like to see happy young girls taking upon themselves cares and troubles, that befit older years. But my darling is like no one else—God love her!"

"She is as good a little thing as ever lived, nurse; but now I must say good bye, for I have left my dear Frederick, who is all the fondest heart could wish, gentle, kind, and inexpressibly attentive and affectionate, quite alone in the drawing room. My dear Lotty, how ill nurse looks; are you sure the servants are attentive and kind to her? I know what servants are; bring a new one in among them, and they become jealous as tigers, especially if they never had a mistress before. I should not wonder if they hated both you and nurse. And oh! my dear, suppose they should poison you—I have heard of such things."

"So have I," said Lotty, highly amused at her visitor's impertinence and credulity.

"Then, my dear, take my advice; make the cook come in and taste every dish before your eyes, ere you touch it."

"That will be rather troublesome; I think I will take my chance."

"But whom have we here, my dear?—a carriage driving to the door. Dear me! it is only Carry; such a figure too, and that frightful baby with her. I really do think that child will be an idiot, it's so odd in its ways. So, my dear, I shall go, for really one never can get in a word when Carry is in company, unless 'tis about teething and croup. Good bye! it delights me to see you so well and happy, with such a charming husband and house; just what you deserve, you dear, little, good soul!"

It was some minutes before Carry could notice Lotty's welcome, she was so busy unpacking the baby, and seeing it was not injured by the drive.

"Now, Jane," to her nurse who accompanied her, "throw this shawl round him, little darling! the room is cold, I think. Do you think we did right to take off his pelisse, Jane?"

"Well, he might miss it when we came to go again," said Jane.

"Perhaps he might, little love! but, Lotty, would you mind shutting the window? I was determined to call upon you, Lotty, and as Margaret offered me the carriage to take baby a drive, I was glad of the opportunity of bringing him here for your old nurse to see; she must be such a judge of fine babies."

"I will ring for her," said Lotty.

"Poor little man!" said old nurse, when she arrived, and took in her tender arms the little, weak, wabbling thing; "and what have they wrapped you up like this for, I wonder? Why, ma'am, you should have him out on this fine, sunny day, sprawling on the grass, with as little clothes on him as can well be."

"Good Heavens! nurse, what a barbarous notion. It would kill my darling."

"He'd be a deal stronger and better-looking," said nurse, not perceiving Mrs. Royston's shocked maternal vanity. "Why, ma'am, look at all my Mr. Beauvilliers, six of them

in a row, every one about six feet high, and stout in proportion—not a sickly, not a weakly one in the lot. They have been every day as wasn't that to say wet, a sprawling on their little dear backs on the grass, from May to September, and nothing on 'em but a bit decency flannel."

"But not Miss Lotty!"

"Eh! but I have had Miss Lotty out from six in the morning to six at night, her little legs and arms blue with cold, and yet she'd cry to go in, and slap my face so pretty. Oh! she was sensible, was she. I had a mind to think often, she was a fairy, she was that clever."

"But she is very little, nurse."

"So she be, ay, so she be; but past all belief, sensible."

"So is my boy; you cannot think what faces he makes if he has not sugar in his food. But look at his legs, nurse; Mr. Royston teazes me so, and says he is sure to be bandy-legged."

"He has a great look on't," said nurse,

more candidly than politely; "but Master Harold's the bonny boy. I never seed such another out of my lot."

Nurse having now completely finished herself in Mrs. Royston's eyes, as a nurse of discernment, was suffered to depart; and telling Jane to pack up the precious child again, Caroline, while assisting in this interesting business, talked to Lotty.

"It is a wonder to me how Margaret's boy does thrive—(that's a darling man!); she has it down at stated times; but would you believe it, she never tastes its food—(oh! Jane, take care, he has got that purple ribbon in his mouth)—or sees his clothes aired—(I wonder if there can be anything poisonous in the dye of that ribbon), or comes up to the nursery at unexpected times—(rub his mouth out well, Jane; ah! my pet lamb! don't cry, my precious!); in fact, she never worries herself in the least about him. And he looks just the sort of child to go off in a fit, or have croup. (Now my darling's little beauty hat, with its pretty, titty, little feather.) And he

has such plain clothes—brown Holland frocks, actually! and he to be a young baronet. (Now then, Jane, walk him up and down before the window until the carriage comes round, where I can see him.) I could not answer to my conscience, Lotty, being such a mother; and I am sure I hope to goodness Flo. will never have any. Her mind is wholly taken up with finery and gossiping, and I feel ready to cry at what her baby will suffer."

"It is to be hoped she will not have one," said Lotty.

"Here is the carriage. I must not keep poppet waiting. Good-bye, dear! delighted to see you so well and happy. Now, darling!"

CHAPTER VI.

Her visitors being gone, and knowing that Philip was not likely to appear again soon after what he had accidentally heard at the window, Lotty called her Bear, and went to sit under the great chesnut tree.

"Ah! Bear, dear Bear! come with me, and we will have a little flirtation."

To the innocent and unsuspecting world, Bear usually appeared as a dog of such stern gravity and profound wisdom, that many who beheld him were inspired with awe, and almost all with fear. But now, what a change under the influence of those magical words, and the bright smile that accompanied them;

Bear became a great, unwieldy puppy, of most frolicsome mood. One moment he had a huge paw on each of Lotty's shoulders; then he was away, like the rushing breeze, impelled by the same viewless purpose as it were. Then like a sinister, villainous dog as he was, he would appear again from behind, and stealing with noiseless footfall, would pounce upon his little mistress like an overwhelming avalanche of Bear, sending her rolling on the sward.

"Oh! Bear, Bear, how wild you are to-day," said Lotty, quite breathless at last, in her endeavours to escape his mad gambols. "Come, Bear, let us sit quiet now, and talk awhile, like discreet people. Well, Bear, would you be Carry? No! you say. Then would you be Flory? No, again. Then, Bear, would you be Lotty? Ah! Bear, think again. Lotty at this age, with such a long life before her and no bright, sunshiny hope. I have hope, do you say? I think you are right, Bear; and besides, I would not be Carry or Flo., I would rather be Lotty. I think as you do

Bear. For we have a good purpose in hand, and we have our duty to do also. But it was sad, my Bear, ah! very sad, that Lotty could make no impression! that poor Lotty still is not understood. But if we try to do our duty, if we steadily pursue our way, if we hope the best, pray for the best—ah! Bear, say we do not succeed, still that is better than being Carry or Flo., and life will pass quickly, looking for that aim, seeking that purpose. And then, Bear, if we succeed, if we open the blinded eyes, make the deaf ear to hear, enlarge the heart to understand—ah! that is angel's work; but we can help, and then, indeed, shall we be rewarded. The uncongenial tie will seem to have been a blessed bond, the long life of dead affections will blossom with roses. But, Bear, dear Bear, I doubt it. Did you say, 'Doubt not, Lotty?' Why, Bear? I tried to-day. My heart was proud and angry, but I did it, because it was my duty. Did you see me, Bear, laying my hand on my heart, to keep it down? The All-Merciful helped me; the All-Powerful will assist me.

I fold myself in the mantle of Faith and Hope. But I agree, my Bear, I agree; look not so wistfully; there are two people in the world with whom I would not change places."

"And to whom are you talking, Lotty?" said Philip, as he drew near, unexpectedly.

"To Bear," she said. "Bear knows all I say; and he knows as well as I do, that we have been holding a very scandalous conversation, and abusing our neighbours."

"What mean you, foolish child?" said Philip, half amused.

"Bear said he would not be Carry; and I said I would not be Flo.; and we were well content to remain as we are, rather than be either."

"I quite agree," said Philip. "I did not think you and Bear could muster up so much sense between you. Of all the insufferable females I ever saw—but pray what was she saying when I was coming in? I know it was something atrocious, you gave me such a warning look."

"She said you were jealous, and would make mince-meat of her spouse."

"Jealous of him, indeed! jealous of that atom of dust—that speck of nonentity! But you had your hand on his arm, Lotty."

"Yes, to show Bear he was a friend."

"Then don't do so again; for, if you prevent Bear from eating him, I shall certainly kick him into the next parish."

"I wish to go this evening to see Millicent," said Lotty.

"Why on earth cannot you stay at home?"

"She is ill, Philip."

"I really do not wonder at it; that man, Herbert, having the constitution of a horse, thinks his wife ought to have the same. He will kill her some day, dragging her about to schools, parish meetings, and sick old women. And then when she is dead, he will, I suppose, canonize her, and think her a saint in Heaven; will thank God for taking her to a better world."

"I think he is blinded at present by overzeal; but I trust he will have no such shock

to cool his ardour, as the loss of his Milly," said Lotty.

"It would serve him right if he had."

"But may I go, Philip?"

"How long will you be away?"

"Two hours."

"If you will promise to be at home by four o'clock, you may go. I have a respect for Mrs. Herbert, I must own; and really should grieve if we lost her."

CHAPTER VII.

"Little Lotty, how pleased I am to see your sweet face," said Milly, when Lotty arrived; "and Margaret will be here in a few minutes, too, and it will amuse me so much to hear you talk."

"Is your cough very bad, Milly?"

"Yes, at night; and the doctors say I shall not get rid of it until my baby is born. Here is Queen Margaret."

"Ah! how nice this is," said Queen Meg.

"Only you two. Do you know, I do not think I am ill-tempered; but Flo. and Carry are rather too much for me, all alone. I must

beg, Lotty, that you and Philip will come and stay with us while they remain."

"You must write and ask Philip," said Lotty.

"What a good little wife! who would have thought, Milly, that our wild, little, saucy Lotty, would have made such a pattern wife!"

"But she is very learned on the matter; don't you remember the matrimonial harangue she gave us?"

"Yes; and how true her prophecy about Flory and Carry has proved. Well, we shall be altogether next week, and may compare notes. Flo.," continued Margaret, "is very ill-natured about Augusta, and says very unkind things of her."

"I do not like Augusta," said Lotty; "she is mischievous, and I am sorry she is coming."

"She can do no harm to us, at all events, Lotty," said Margaret, in surprise.

"Yes, I think, if she wished it, she would make Gerald elope with her."

They both laughed at this speech, and asked

Lotty if she was jealous, which made her pout, in school-girl fashion.

Gerald at this moment came in, and addressing Margaret, said, "I wish, Lady Leigh, you would use your influence with Sir Harold, not to employ the Jones'. Both father and son are notorious drunkards and Sabbath-breakers."

"Ah, Gerald! it rejoices me so much to see Harold employing any one, as well as working himself, that I could not, would not, say aught that might lead to another change."

"But think of the sin, think of the responsibility you draw upon yourself, in giving such men encouragement; why, you are answerable before God for giving them the means of committing such sins."

"By and by, Gerald, when Harold is more settled in his plans, then we may try; but not now, I entreat you."

"Pardon me; you are not justified in so doing. Are these men to go on sinning—to be encouraged therein, because you have not

sufficient moral rectitude in you, to urge Sir Harold to do what he ought?"

"In other words," said Lotty, "you think Margaret ought to let her husband take his chance of sinking into the idle, listless man he was, rather than that the Jones' should make beasts of themselves?"

"Exactly, Mrs. Leigh."

"I will not do it," said Margaret.

"Then I must," said Gerald; "it ought to be done, and it must."

"I thought," said Lotty, "that a minister of the Gospel left the stern principles of duty and obedience to be enforced by other professions than his own. While following the footsteps of his Blessed Master, he persuades men to enter the True Fold, with gentle words, holy pity, and calm forbearance."

"But this duty is so clear, so simple," said Gerald; "am I to pander to the weakness of a sensible man, such as I know Sir Harold to be, when he likes——"

"Yes," interrupted Lotty, "if by this means you save him."

"Mrs. Leigh! I am shocked; pardon me, but your doctrine is painful! Suffer me, some day, to talk this matter over with you. At present, Milly, I must go to the school. Are you sufficiently well to accompany me?"

"No, that she is not," said Margaret.

"But remember how inconvenient it is," said Gerald.

"I know it is, love," said Milly; "but I am indeed quite unfit for the exertion."

"So, good-bye, Gerald," said Lotty, "and as you go to the school, here is something for you to meditate about. I don't think high church clergymen, as they are called, ought to marry, they make such very uncomfortable husbands. They look upon their wives as machines to administer to their bodily comforts, and as slaves to carry out their ultra views. They have no consideration for either their personal or mental objections to such things. The duty of making them happy, of being courteous, kind, and forbearing, seems forgotten. They are on such a high pinnacle of excellence, they cannot stoop to the minor virtues."

"You are severe, Mrs. Leigh; uncharitable," said Gerald, with mournful fervour.

"I have borrowed the words, Gerald, but I would have you weigh them. Did you not promise and vow to cherish Millicent, in sickness and health, until death parted you? Death speaks in that cough."

"Ah!" said Gerald, springing to Millicent's side.

"It is but too true, love, that I am far from well," said Millicent, gently to him; "but my death shall never rest at your door, Gerald. I am no weak wife, not to say what I think; neither are you so severe to your Milly, that I should fear to appeal to you. I overtaxed my strength in the winter, dearest, and suffer for it now; but leave me at present, and you shall hear the doctor's opinion, and all I have to say, this evening."

He was reluctant to leave her, but she was getting flushed and nervous, and he listened to Margaret's advice to let her rest now.

But he begged Lotty to follow him into another room. Taking both her hands in his,

with eyes full of anguish, he looked into hers. "Is her life in danger?"

"I believe not, Gerald."

"How long has she been thus ailing?"

"I noticed how thin and pale she had become, when I came to High Leigh."

"And I never saw it, never heeded it. Ah, Lotty, if I am to lose her—so long waited for—only just won, what good will my life be to me?"

"Pray to God, Gerald, and put faith in your prayers."

"Faith! Lotty?"

"Yes, faith; you weary yourself to death—you work night and day—you take no meal in peace—you give yourself no relaxation—you create a vexed spirit within you. And what do you gain by all this? Nothing. Pray to God, and suffer Him to answer your prayers, without putting yourself in the place of God. Why beseech Him to grant you a favour, and then try to do it yourself?"

"Lotty, Lotty, your doctrine is not tenable; but I go to think the matter over."

CHAPTER VIII.

It wanted five minutes to four o'clock, as Lotty rode up the avenue to High Leigh. Philip was sitting under the veranda.

"What made you ride across the fields, instead of coming by the road?" said he, gloomily.

"I was afraid of being late, Philip; the fields are two miles shorter."

"So you would rather break your neck than fail in your appointment."

"It looks like it," said Lotty.

Was there no sentiment in Philip's breast, that prompted him to gather the little fair thing to his heart, and clasping her close, bid

her break every promise to him sooner than risk that dearest, most precious life? So lovely as she looked too, the thick curls in disorder, the excited eyes looking wonderful in size and brilliance, the rich peach-bloom on her cheek, and the red lips parted, as the quick breath came and went, all showing the haste with which she had ridden to fulfil her promise.

No, there was but one feeling besides the uncontrollable admiration with which he gazed upon her; and that was a mean, unworthy thought, a fruit from the upas tree, that dwelt within that fine, handsome form.

He would have given his right hand that she had been five minutes behind the time, rather than before. If she would but do one thing with which he could find fault; if but for one fleeting moment, he had it in his power to upbraid; if he could see those fearless eyes droop but an instant before his;—he would rejoice, as men do, when the life-wish of their heart is gratified.

"Margaret is close behind me," said Lotty;

"that is, she is coming by the road, and will be here in five minutes."

"I thought you were so fond of Margaret that you spent every moment of your time in her company; why, then, did you not accompany her?"

"I should have been late, and that, Bear, is a thing you and I do not like to be when we have made a promise, is it not, old fellow?" And Lotty departed to put herself in walking trim, Margaret arriving before she returned.

There was something in Margaret that made it almost impossible for any one to refuse, did she make a request. This might arise, in the first place, from the fact, that she seldom had a favour to ask, which was not to be more gratifying to the conferrer than to herself.

In the second place, there was such a low, sweet tone in her voice, that no one could answer until the soft sound ceased. Thus Margaret could plead all her arguments ere she was interrupted.

Thirdly, the simple earnestness of her manner made all her requests seem to be such, that

it became not weak, mortal man to resist an angel's pleading. And then her beauty—the Leighs ever paid a sort of devotion to beauty; so that all these things combined, when Lotty joined them, she found Margaret had asked, Philip had consented, and they were to spend a week at Court Leigh.

"Horrid bore!" said Philip, as he returned from handing Margaret into her carriage. "Do you hear me?" he continued; "this is a horrid bore!"

"Going to Court Leigh, Philip?" answered Lotty.

"Yes," said Philip, "to be tormented by the silliest lot of people I ever met."

"I suppose we need not go, unless you like it," said Lotty.

Philip was silent; he had made the remark in order to extort from Lotty whether Margaret and herself had not made the plan first, and also if Lotty was anxious to go. He could find out neither the one nor the other, so he was forced to speak out.

"Pray, did you and Lady Leigh arrange this invitation before you consulted me?"

"Margaret told me she meant to ask us. I told her to write to you, and Millicent said she had better ask *viva voce*."

"I knew it was a concerted scheme. I felt sure I was to be dragged into an unexpected consent. I shall not go!"

"Very well," said Lotty.

"Of course, you wish to go?" said Philip.

"I am afraid Bear and I are not so amiable. We would rather visit Margaret alone, would we not, Bear, after that sad, naughty conversation we had?"

"I suppose we must go," said Philip, "as I promised."

"Just as you please, Philip."

He looked at her, putting his fishing-rod together with her little, white fingers. He knew she spoke the truth, but nothing prompted him to say, "I am sorry, Lotty, that I fancied otherwise."

Gerald allowed no private thoughts to interfere with his duties at the school. As soon

as that was over, with strong, vigorous strides he took his way, five miles off, to Dr. Murray. The good doctor, knowing the character of his visitor, made no secret of his fears regarding Mrs. Herbert's health.

"I should," said he, "be very uneasy, indeed, but for her present condition. Her child born, I then shall be able to judge how much her constitution is affected, and how much may be imputed to this cause."

"And in case of the former, Dr. Murray?" asked Gerald.

"Why, then, Mrs. Herbert must go, for a year or two, to a warmer climate."

"To save her life?" murmured Gerald, hoarsely.

"Nothing else can save it, my dear sir," answered the kind doctor; "she seems to me to have been born with a good constitution, but to have been badly nursed, or neglected."

"That is true," said Gerald, calling to remembrance the early hardships of Millicent's childhood.

"You may rely upon one thing, Mr. Her-

bert; deeply as I know you will feel anything I may have to say, you shall have the truth as nakedly placed before you as my science or skill shews it to me."

"Thanks! thanks!" was all that Gerald could mutter; and he strode away over the hills, to wrestle with the sorrow that seemed bending like a dark cloud over his head.

To save her life, he must leave his charge, his duties, his people. He needed a clearer head than was his at present, to solve the question as to which he ought to do. Love and nature pleaded loudly, duty and conscience seemed sternly to rebuke them. As he turned his face homewards, beset with such feelings of irresolution as had never before assailed that firm, upright mind, he met Harold, returning on horseback from a tour of inspection. Gerald knew that the day was oppressively hot, which might, in some degree, account for the vexation and weariness apparent on Harold's countenance.

A warning voice seemed to tell him—"Pass on, and say nothing." But would that be act-

ing the part of a conscientious, just, and righteous pastor of his people?

"My dear Sir Harold," said he, laying his hand upon the horse's rein, "suffer me to say a few words to you."

An expression passed over Harold's face, which told, as words tell, that it wanted but this drop of vexation to brim the already full cup.

"I am in a hurry," he said, with all the Leigh sulkiness grafted on the Leigh obstinacy.

"I will detain you but a moment," said Gerald, his late feelings lending unusual softness to his manner; "will you oblige me by not employing the Jones'?"

"They are the best workmen on the estate!" exclaimed Harold.

"But the worst men, Sir Harold; their characters are too notorious to be unknown to you; and the Browns, who have had very little work from Mr. Price, are the reverse—church-going, religious, quiet, sober people; they are at present almost starving for want of employment."

"And pray, Mr. Herbert, are you aware," said Harold, turning pale with anger, "that Price was obliged to discharge your highly-principled Browns, because, occupied, I suppose, with their prayers and Bibles, their work was totally useless? Everything they did had to be done over again."

"Do not scoff, Sir Harold; it may be true that the Jones' have the worldly advantage of knowing their trade better, but should that be the plea of a man, gifted with every attribute of sense and discernment that the Great Father of us all can bestow? should that blind him to the one great, fearful fact, that, by employing such men, you give them the means of committing sin? You put into their hands the power of damning their immortal souls for ever; you place others in the dangerous vortex of contamination. Oh, Sir Harold, be warned, be advised!"

"I'll warn myself of one thing, I'll be advised of one fact," said Harold, in a lordly, Leigh passion. "You have spoken your last word to me, you prating parson! You have

looked your last look as a friend! Not employ any person I choose, ha!—Take your pick and choice, ha!—I am likely to do it! I feel disposed, truly, to lose the best workman I have, because he does not pray in a becoming fashion! and I am to take any fool that offers, provided he goes to church—ha!"

And he galloped away with an oath on his lips, and anger in his heart, while Gerald stopped to pray for him, with nothing but pity in his heart. And yet, Gerald, did you not remember your Master's precepts, who talked with publicans and sinners, who blessed the peacemakers, who fed the hungry, healed the sick, forgave the wretched?

Did he ask out of the five thousand who were fed with the five barley loaves and two fishes, who were holy, who were sinners?

Did he demand of the leper, the blind, the lame, "Why are ye such sinners? I heal but the holy and good."

Did he not forgive the wretched as they looked on him, the sinners as they touched the hem of his garment? Why? oh, Gerald!

why deem it part of your sacred, holy calling to be judge? why pass sentence on the sinner, weak, wavering or wicked, ere death has sealed up his last hope? Rather help him on his stumbling path, with cheering, persuasive words; with example, not commands; with deeds, not judgments; with hope and energy, not despair and doom. Help the weak sinner on his weary way, raise not up before him the steep mountain of perfection, but let the hill of duty and difficulty slope gently to his sight, until, strengthened by exercise, invigorated by hope, he looks behind at what he has surmounted, and gathering joy and assurance from the sight, he views the higher hill and steeper path, that rise, but as brighter goals to win, fairer scenes to view, until at last Heaven rewards his sight.

CHAPTER IX.

Either alarmed at the account of Millicent, or wishful to see her before he started on his yacht excursion with his half-brothers, Basil arrived about this time, accompanied by the boys.

They formed a very fine addition to the party at Court Leigh, spending most of their time there, to relieve Milly of too much of their company. Basil was all life and spirits, the boys wild with joy, and so full of Lotty and her dog, that neither she nor Bear had time to pass severer judgments on Flo. and Carry. Harold alone was in a vile humour,

not even Basil could smooth him down; and Philip was nearly as bad.

It had formed no part of his plans for the week they were to spend at Court Leigh, that Lotty was to be happy. But she was most provokingly so, renewing her acquaintance with the young Erles, and consorting with Basil, until her husband was driven half-mad with jealousy and vexation

As for Brian and Hugh Erle, in true boy-fashion, they made no secret of their admiration for Mrs. Leigh.

"Lucky for you I am only fifteen," said Hugh to Philip, "or I would fight you."

"No, you should not have her," said Brian; "I would fight the world for her."

Most men would have felt rather flattered as well as amused at their boyish enthusiasm; but the words sunk like poisonous weeds into Philip's jealous heart.

Augusta surprised everybody by her pale looks, and subdued manner; perhaps some might have noticed the burning blush that rushed over her face, as Philip bowed to her

with over-strained, and, as it were, mock courtesy, on their first greeting; but in a day or so, she recovered, and was quite herself.

"Well, my dear," said Flo., "here we are met again once more; really it is quite delightful, especially as I have been longing to show you my darling Fred; to my eyes he stands foremost as the flower of the flock."

"In what way?" said Augusta, coldly.

"Why, of all the six husbands of us six school-girls—oh! by the by, my dear, I beg pardon—I quite forgot you do not possess one yet. However, never mind, I dare say your turn will come shortly. I know a cousin of Fred's, to whom I dare say I could introduce you; very, very like him, dear fellow! only not nearly so handsome, and shorter, with rather red hair, but very amiable. He would do anything I tell him, he is so sensible, so we will have you two together, and see if we cannot manage it. But, as I was saying, not one of all the husbands equals my dearest Frederick in my eyes."

"I should hope not, Flo.," said Lotty.

"Ah! there you are, you little sarcastic Bear; but I know well enough what you mean, poor little dear! However, we will say nothing, it is not every one who is so fortunate as I am."

"Dear little darling man!" interrupted a voice, by her side; "is it waking, little pet! and would it stretch its itty pretty arms?"

"Bless me, what a fool you make of yourself, Carry," said Flo., "as if there never had been a baby before; besides, you really must allow me to give you a little advice. It is very inconvenient, not to say disagreeable, always to have a baby in the drawing-room."

"You must do without my company, then, if you dislike that of my darling child."

"We will try and bear the loss, all the more, from knowing that you will not miss us."

"It is a mother's duty to attend to her child, precious, helpless thing."

"Then where is the use of your having a nurse, I should like to know? My dear, I never like to interfere in other people's matters,

but I think it my duty to tell you, as my oldest school friend, that you and your baby are perfect plagues."

"Thank you!" said Carry with bitter civility; and sweeping up her child's paraphernalia, she also swept herself and it out of the room.

"There! I thought I should banish her; now we will have a little rational conversation. I make a point of always speaking the truth to Carry, and I mean further to tell her that she ought to take a lesson from Margaret. By the bye, where is Margaret? running after Sir Harold, I'll be bound; now, mark my words, she will sicken him of her company. Though my dearest Frederick says he would never leave my side night or day, I won't permit it; I say 'No, Frederick, I know the upshot of it all;' and besides, what is more tiresome, than having a man dangling after you all day? no time for nice little chats about fashions, dresses, and one's lovers."

"I suppose you have done with the latter now," said Lotty.

"Ah! ah! sly little puss!" said Flo.; "but, at all events, if I have done, or ought to have done, Augusta has not; now, my dear, do tell us, give us a history of all your lovers."

Flo. had a very unladylike habit of winking with one eye; and as she made this remark, she winked at Lotty with unmistakable meaning. She meant to make Augusta rehearse all her fibs about Philip and others, by which she and Lotty would have some fun.

"Anything the matter with your eye?" said Lotty, in answer to the wink, and thinking it quite fair she should also have her amusement.

"My eye? no, child! what an innocent you are!"

"If she is," said Augusta, loftily, "I am not; and did I think it needful to punish vulgar impertinence, Mrs. Bankes should know my opinion of her."

"Which, luckily, is of no consequence to Mrs. Bankes," said that lady, with high gusto at having provoked Augusta. "Nonsense, my dear! don't get up on your stilts; for though we know little Lotty cut you out, you have

had a narrow escape; I am sure when I look at that man, really, my dear Lotty, I quite shudder!"

"Why do you look at him then?" said Lotty.

"What a little imperturbable thing it is," said Flo., looking a little disconcerted.

"I think," said Augusta, "it is no mark of good breeding, Mrs. Bankes, to speak thus of a man before his wife."

"But Lotty knows my way, and that I must ever speak as I think. Not but what he is wonderfully handsome, and what you call very *distingué*-looking; and upon the whole, I don't wonder, Augusta, that you have fretted so about him, for you would have made a very striking couple—he is so dark, and you so fair; in fact, you would have suited him, in point of appearance and contrast, much better than Lotty."

"I am sorry I cannot make him over to you now, Augusta," said Lotty; "I am afraid the law would interfere."

"Spare your pity, child, no one envies you,"

replied Augusta, looking at Lotty with anything but loving eyes.

"No, that they don't; Heavens! how he scowls at those fine boys! By the by, how handsome Lord Erlscourt is! now there is a man for you! except my own Frederick, I never saw one whom I could sooner trust with my affections."

Lotty laughed merrily, partly at the idea of comparing the little, insignificant Bankes with Basil, partly at Flo.'s thinking she had any affections.

"Why do you laugh, child?" said Flo., who though perfectly well satisfied with herself in every respect, yet was keenly alive to ridicule.

"Do you really wish to know?"

"Yes, of course, I desire it."

"Then, because Basil would make two Mr. Bankes, and your affections are always placed on your last new dress."

"What a little pert thing! however, my dear, you are so far right, I love a new dress. I think it is my duty, for Frederick's sake, to

dress well. So you call him 'Basil;' very familiar, upon my word! and pray what does my Lord Turk say to that?"

"He has never said anything as yet."

"Then take my advice, my dear, and don't do it again, or we shall be having mischief. I am a very good judge in such matters; I shall never forget Frederick and those clerks at his father's bank. Really he looked as if he could eat them all."

"Rather an indigestible meal," said Lotty.

"Funny little thing you are, to be sure, Lotty! I don't so much wonder now, that the Grand Turk fancied you instead of Augusta, you are so amusing; though certainly, to my taste, you, Augusta, are far the handsomer, and you have such a figure too! really you can carry off any style of dress, and any number of flounces—and do you know, my dear, they are getting to nine in number. Unlucky for you, Lotty, as I don't see how you could wear more than three."

"That is why I try to exist without any," said Lotty.

"You certainly do, and always did, dress in a peculiar style, that no one else could bear, I fancy; but it quite becomes you, my dear, and little and childish as you are, Lotty, you have a pretty little face. But I must go and see after Margaret. A fine thing indeed! dragging us down all the way from London, and then shutting herself up all day with Sir Harold."

Flo. seemed to have been as successful in probing Sir Harold and Lady Leigh's weak points, as she had been in finding out Augusta's and Carry's; for Harold was seen passing the windows in a fiery mood, while Margaret joined them with her fair face unusually flushed.

CHAPTER X.

Harold had cause to be vexed: his Margaret had not sympathised with him as he expected on Gerald's account; besides, he had had a short and concise letter from his bankers—

"Messrs. Moneypenny's compliments to Sir Harold Leigh, Bart., and beg to draw his attention to his cash account, &c. &c."

For a few moments he gazed on the items mentioned in the letter in blank dismay. Then the first pang of ruin and poverty rushed through Harold's heart; while the large quantity of repairs in hand, which, if pursued, would swell those horrible items into twice the amount, appalled him.

He rang furiously for Mr. Price, who arrived in due time.

"Look there," said Sir Harold.

"I am not surprised," said Price, blandly, and rubbing his hands in a provokingly easy manner.

"What the devil do you mean, Price?"

"Of course, Sir Harold, I expected no less. I am only surprised it is not more."

"If you do not wish to drive me mad, speak out, man, and tell me what is the meaning of that letter."

"You have overdrawn your account, Sir Harold."

Mr. Price, the account, and the bankers, were all sent one after another to a very hot place by Sir Harold; and finding that his master was in no mood to be trifled with, Mr. Price at last condescended to speak out.

"You know, Sir Harold, I warned you not to take so much upon you at once, I kept advising you to do a little at a time; but my Lady, you see, Sir Harold, my Lady would go among the people, and she got your ear, Sir

Harold, when I was not permitted to speak, old and valued servant as I have been to the family—" here Mr. Price made a demonstration of emotion.

"Hang your foolery, man! come at once to the point, and let me know how I am to get out of this mess."

"Perhaps," said Price maliciously (for he was a rogue now, though he might not have been one when he first became agent of the Leigh estates), "perhaps, Sir Harold, you would like to consult with my Lord Erlscourt; his opinion has ever——"

Harold interrupted him with another violent exclamation, proving to Mr. Price that his shot had told.

For after all he had boasted, and still was boasting to Basil, how was he to tell him the real state of the case?—more especially as Basil had told him the same thing as Mr. Price, namely, not to do too much at a time.

"We may certainly fell a little more timber, and there is the half year's rent coming, in six weeks," continued Price.

"Three thousand five hundred pounds; what a drop that is to liquidate such a debt, man, and we to live too," said Harold.

"If you, Sir Harold, could persuade my Lady to reduce the establishment a little."

Mr. Price hated "my Lady," and he knew Harold could not bear her name mentioned by him; so he was prepared for another burst of wrath, and then a dismissal to think over the matter. This all took place after breakfast; and Margaret knowing the lines of Harold's face, as the lover of nature traces the coming storm, was appalled as she entered his study, to ask if he required her for any business. He sullenly folded up the letter; men do not like women to see that they have been foolish or unwise.

"That idiot, Price, says we are doing too many repairs, and shall shortly want money."

"Have you not the fifteen thousand pounds my father left, Harold?"

"More than half is gone; a part I spent in the first payment for our yacht, Margaret."

"Oh, sell it again, dear Harold!" said Margaret, quickly.

"Sell the yacht! give up the thing I have been so full of all the winter, Margaret! I little thought you would be so unkind, unjust."

"Not unjust, Harold; our people——"

"I hate the people; why should I spend my money on a lot of ungrateful rascals? I will leave them all. I will shut up Court Leigh, and we will go to the Mediterranean, Margaret, make a home of the yacht, and living in those lovely, luxurious climes, we shall be free from all trouble and care."

"But our duty, Harold?"

Harold sent duty off after Mr. Price, the cash account, and the bankers, making Margaret's cheek pale with the first scene of violent temper that he had displayed before her. In the heat of his anger, he accused her of selfishness, cant, hypocrisy, want of love, coalition with Gerald, and was winding up with a strong bias to send her after Duty, when the door

opened, and the amiable face of Mrs. Bankes made its appearance.

"Hoity, toity! here's a scene!" said she, highly pleased at having arrived at this crisis; "who would have thought, Sir Harold, that you shut Margaret up here, merely to favour her with a matrimonial exhibition of passion? I am glad to see Margaret has enough spirit in her to oppose you, as I suppose you don't get into rages for nothing. I always thought her such a meek-spirited wife."

"Whatever you thought, Mrs. Bankes," said Harold, recovering himself on the instant, all his usual high-bred courtesy in his voice and manner, "Lady Leigh has the advantage this time, of being in the right, and I have to apologize to you, my dear wife, for an exhibition of temper, which I trust is my first and last before you." He kissed her hand as he spoke, and left the room.

"Upon my word, very pretty! and so this is the first time he ever got into a rage with you. Well, take care, the leap once taken, all

to be very careful, and not irritate him again. I am a very good judge of character, and these Leighs have very odd tempers. Put them out, my dear, and they are mad, raving. How thankful I am my dearest Frederick has such a sweet, feminine disposition. Upon my word, I feel for you and Lotty, indeed I do."

This was said at the drawing-room door, so that Lotty heard it, and said:

"Why are Margaret and I such objects of pity?"

"Ah! my dear," said Flo., winking violently at Margaret, "little pitchers have long ears."

"I consider Mr. Bankes the object of most pity in the world," said Augusta, with emphasis.

"To be sure, my dear," said the imperturbable Flo., in her most irritating manner; "I understand, because he is not blessed with your lovely hand. Great pity, indeed, that he should merely choose a sweet, amiable, lively, agreeable (it would not become me to say the sheep follow. You must mind, Margaret,

pretty) wife, instead of such a charmer as you, my dear."

"So that is your estimate of yourself, is it, Flo.?" said Lotty, hastily, to prevent an explosion of wrath from the angry Augusta.

"And a very just one, too. I hold that person to be a fool who has not a tolerable good opinion of himself."

"Especially when they think of nothing else than themselves, they ought to be perfect in the study," said Augusta.

"Very true, my dear; besides, if one has not a good opinion of oneself, who else will, I should like to know?"

"'Who else,' Flo.? what grammar!" said Lotty, trying in vain to turn the conversation.

"Grammar or not, Lotty, it is language pretty well understood by those who would rather not understand it. You and I never indulged in any flirtations by which our consciences would be harmed; we never said we had offers when we had not; we never told—"

"Florence we are not at school," interrupted Margaret, her lovely face assuming such a reproving and severe look, that even Florence was startled; "such bickerings were disgraceful then, how much more so now."

She left the room, and Augusta followed her.

"Well, to be sure! my Lady Leigh is taking enough upon her; she forgets I am a married woman too. I have a good mind to tell Fred. of her conduct: as if I were a school-girl still. I think I will. He will flare up I know, and tell Sir Harold his mind about his wife."

"Then they will have a duel, Flo., and Sir Harold will shoot Mr. Bankes," said Lotty.

Flo. was for a moment abashed, but presently resumed with renewed vigour:

"Not at all, my dear; my dearest Fred. may shoot him, and serve him right too, thinking of such bloody-minded revenge. And your husband might be his second if he chose, and I'd have Lord Erlscourt for Fred.'s—"

"And Brian and Hugh to hold the pistols, while you and I look on to see fair play."

"Come, Lotty, I won't have you treat as a jest, what is a very serious matter."

"Oh! I thought you were in jest. I never imagined a woman possessed of a dearest Fred., could coolly sit down and arrange a duel for him, just because Margaret desired to have Augusta's feelings spared."

"To be sure, my dear, who could, indeed?" said Flo., rapidly turning round under the fear of being laughed at; "Augusta always makes such mountains out of nothing. No wonder one does not know which is the head and which is the tail of what she is doing. But, poor thing! we ought to pity her—she is quite soured. I am sure if I am thankful for anything, it is that I have a good temper. Nothing puts me out. I declare, here is Lady Katherine marching up the avenue, like an old swan, with Miss Leigh two steps behind her. What a regular old maid she is; getting red at the nose, too. Would not it be fun to get her into a flir-

tation! Poor old thing! I dare say she does not know what the word means. I think I will give her a little advice on the matter. I am fond of helping on affairs like that; and though I never make or meddle, a little word often excites a flame."

CHAPTER XI.

Margaret knew, in spite of Harold's control over himself, that as long as the matter remained on his mind, he would talk of it. She was fully persuaded he would keep his promise, and suffer no harsh words to reach her ear, as if for herself, but that he must disburthen his vexation by talking it away: she prepared herself; and it needed preparation, for the scenes that she had to go through. To combat the resolution to leave home, people, and everything, that he might lead a quiet, listless, yet delicious life, in fairer, warmer climes, she knew required every exertion on

her part, would call forth every power of love and persuasion. And she was to do this; she who felt that, with Harold, a cottage, a palace, the frozen seas, the torrid zone, were alike home to her.

And yet his immortal welfare, his eternal happiness, required him to remember that he lived not for himself alone. He must dwell where God had placed him, to perform his allotted task of life.

For those she loved, Margaret was unequalled in her devotion and firmness. Again and again, Harold argued the point; again and again, Margaret resisted his appeal. It is true, he gave her no harsh words; it is true, he indulged in no outward passion; but it burnt within all the more freely, that it was smothered outwardly, until one evening Margaret suggested that they should consult Basil. From that moment Harold shut his thoughts up in sullen silence.

Mrs. Bankes had been favouring him with a few of her ideas upon Lord Erlscourt's evident pleasure in Lady Leigh's society, which,

in comparison to what he felt in hers, certainly could bear no investigation. A few embellished facts of their former friendship, a few imaginary notions which she felt it her duty to tell Sir Harold, made him, in his present mood, forget his wife's devoted love, Basil's noble confidence.

Mrs. Bankes had also, with the zeal and energy of character on which she prided herself, made Mr. Royston see that his wife was a greater fool than he had at first imagined her; and being perfectly satisfied with the happy result produced in both these cases, she looked round to see whose condition she could further improve.

Fortunately for Lotty, she was rather afraid of Philip, and determined, in her own mind, to leave his welfare to the last; so she took Lotty under her kind protection, associating her with the perpetual stings that she was inflicting on Augusta throughout all her other operations. It became hard to say which Augusta hated most. That she nourished in her heart feelings of bitter hatred and envy towards

Lotty, has been seen; and though her better judgment might have shewn her that Lotty had nothing to do with Flo.'s vulgar impertinence, still she hated on.

Born in a family whose principal characteristics consisted of beauty and badness, and who consequently had neither any love for each other, nor any respectability to keep up, it was but too true that Augusta deserved a great deal of the censure with which Mrs. Bankes overwhelmed her; but reproved in this coarse manner, brought to shame by a woman whom she despised for her vulgarity, yet feared for her insufferable assurance, every bad passion in Augusta's heart was roused. She had come down with the firm determination to mar Lotty's matrimonial happiness, no matter how she came out of the encounter herself, so that her purpose was fulfilled. But it required very little observation to see that Philip, morose as he was to her, loved his little child-wife with idolatry; while she, Lotty, the being she wished to hurt, injure, overwhelm with grief and despair, would probably mourn for

them as the pitying angels mourn over sinners, but at the same time would rejoice in any act that restored her once more to her beloved Beauvillians.

Thus Augusta felt she was powerless; and her heart grew sick and sad within her, when she compared herself to her five school-fellows. Not that she cared for, or envied Florence and Caroline; thank Heaven! though they were married, she did envy them. But, from her childhood, this one idea had been placed prominently before her—she was to marry, and that as early as possible.

Her father, without having any great liking for domestic life, had yet been severely tried in his endeavours to do his duty in that line; for after some years of most uncomfortable eccentricity, his wife had become permanently insane, leaving to his care and management three wild boys and one pretty girl. As she grew up, Augusta discovered that she was only held in esteem by her immediate relatives and guardians, according to her promise of beauty. And she had not the pleasure of

thinking they were proud of, and delighted in her appearance, because she was their daughter and sister, but because a female relative was a very tiresome burden, and they wanted to ease their shoulders of the care as soon as possible.

Thus, without love to soften her, without principles to guide her, no wonder she looked to marriage as the only possible relief to an unpleasant and somewhat forlorn situation.

But being deficient in feminine tact, and gentle wiles, she had been too open in her endeavours, too barefaced to escape censure, besides failing in her object.

She would have hated Margaret had it been possible, for beguiling Sir Harold, and so exposing her to the taunts and upbraidings of her family.

She did hate Lotty, because she felt, had she gained Philip Leigh, she would have loved him, and for his sake have become all that a woman should be.

She felt that she had compromised her character most seriously, and her father being dead, she had but her wild and dissipated bro-

thers to fall back upon, whose companionship was much eschewed by well-disposed folk. Thus her situation was truly deplorable, and it required no stings from Mrs. Bankes' flippant tongue to make it worse. Had she but made a confidant of Margaret or Millicent, had she crushed her proud and irritated spirit, there might have been some hope. But at present she was becoming reckless; and knowing that when she left Court Leigh, she would have but a rough and unkind reception from the only home open to her, she was determined in some way to set a seal upon her fate.

Yet how?

It was useless remaining much longer in Cheshire. Court Leigh was unlike the Court Leigh of the former visit. A gloom hung over every thing, casting its foreboding shadow on a doomed house.

Lord Erlscourt was unmarried, it is true, but experience told her, "'twere vain to try" to attract him. His brothers were such complete boys, and besides, the elegant Miss Clare was not at all to their taste: they were just at the

age to despise flounces, feathers, and dress, which Miss Clare delighted in. Yet where to go? Her thoughts rushed for a second towards "dear Fred.'s red-haired cousin,"—but no, that was too humiliating; and the sound of Flo.'s active tongue, making itself heard through the long avenue, above the rustling of the leaves, and the twittering of the birds, gave her such a shock, that to go off to Australia with a gold-digger, seemed preferable. She drew near to the speakers to escape her thoughts.

"My dear Lord Erlscourt," was Mrs. Bankes saying, "how you do spoil those boys; now take my advice, or you will one day repent it—they will turn upon you."

Basil was lying on the grass, his half-brothers hanging about him, and teasing him every minute with questions—in fact, they wanted to rouse Basil from his book, that he might come with them on some favourite excursion.

Basil looked lovingly at his boys.

"There is always ill-blood between half-

brothers, pursued Mrs. Bankes. "I should not be doing my duty if I did not warn you, my Lord. Remember you are not married, and have no heirs. It will be a fine thing for one of them to become Lord Erlscourt."

"He will make a very fine Lord Erlscourt, madam," said Basil, as he laid his hand on Brian's dark curls.

"I! Lord Erlscourt?" said Brian; "never, Basil, when you die, I shall die."

"So shall I," said Hugh; "we could not live without you, brother."

"Ah! young gentleman, that's all very fine. Just wait till your brother has a family."

"He has," said Brian; "we all live with him."

"I mean married, my dear, with children of his own."

"I am not 'your dear,' ma'am," retorted Brian, angrily; "and I wish Basil was married, and I wish he had married Mrs. Leigh."

"And may I ask, young man," said Philip, haughtily, "why you should have fixed on my wife for such an honour?"

"Because I love her, and so does Hugh; and we think, yes, we both think——"

"And Basil thinks," interrupted Lord Erlscourt, "that you are a couple of foolish boys."

"I insist upon hearing what he was going to say," exclaimed Philip, hotly.

"Oh!" said Brian, nothing loth, "we think she is a great deal too good for you. If we had Mrs. Leigh to live with us, she should be treated as a queen, which she deserves."

Philip stretched out his hand to seize the boy, livid with rage. The active fellows were up and away, with Philip after them; they enjoying the fun, he in a towering passion.

"Well," said Mrs. Bankes, making the most of the opportunity of having Lord Erlscourt all to herself, "your boys have served him right, great brute! always snubbing that poor little thing, who runs her legs off to please him."

"She does not look unhappy, Mrs. Bankes."

"No, she dare not, or I am sure he would beat her. Really it is shocking to think how

Margaret and Lotty have thrown themselves away on those mad Leighs!"

"Mad!" said Basil.

"Yes, mad," said Mrs. Bankes; "cannot you see it in their eyes?"

"But there is no madness in the family, madam."

"Why, no, I suppose not," said Mrs. Bankes, reluctantly; "but, then, how can you account for Sir Harold's jealousy of you?"

"Of me, Mrs. Bankes?"

"Yes, of you; any mole can see it."

Mrs. Bankes was rather alarmed at Lord Erlscourt's raising himself from the ground at one spring, and preparing to depart.

"Where are you going?" she said.

"To Sir Harold—"

"Oh, mercy me, don't! You will have a quarrel! There will be a duel! They will trace it to me! There will be such a scene! —and Frederick—oh, my dear Frederick!—he'll be drawn in. Oh, for mercy's sake, my Lord!—for goodness gracious sake, don't!"

"Then, madam, will you be kind enough to

tell me if you really think what you said, that Sir Harold Leigh is jealous of me, Lord Erlscourt?"

"I never heard him say—I don't quite know; but Frederick and I were saying—"

"Madam, if you cannot say yes or no, I shall depart to seek Sir Harold."

"Oh! 'yes,' then I'll say, or 'no,' or whatever you wish," said the alarmed Mrs. Bankes.

"That will not suit me. You must state on what grounds your information is founded."

"Well, Frederick and I—"

"Do you mean, madam, that Mr. Bankes and you think so?"

"We had just a few suspicions."

"And have you heard that any other person has?"

"No, never, no, not a word! It was only Frederick and I talking."

"Then, madam, allow me to say, that if I hear such a thing again, or a word whispered, or anything of a similar kind, in this house, said by you or Mr. Bankes, I shall—"

"He'll duck Mr. Bankes in the horsepond,"

interrupted Brian, who, with Hugh, had returned unperceived from their race with Philip.

"Yes, and then horsewhip him with his best hunting-whip," continued Hugh.

"And if you or he teaze Basil any more, we'll shoot him!" concluded they, in a breath.

"Hush, boys!" said Basil; "you must never threaten a lady."

And, with a low bow to the discomforted Mrs. Bankes, he departed, bearing both the boys with him.

"Well! if I did not give him a fine fright," said Mrs. Bankes to herself, recovering her spirits as soon as they departed out of sight. "Ah! here is that good little thing, Lotty. Here's my Lord gone off at a tangent, and Mr. Leigh has had to rush after those two rude boys, to give them a good flogging, which I am sure they deserve; more's the pity they did not get it—and all about you, too."

"I dare say you had a helping hand in the mischief, Flo."

"Ah! that is always what you used to say at school, Lotty; but you never were more

mistaken in any one's character in your life. I am just the reverse of that—quiet and peaceable, I never make nor meddle."

"I will hear the rest of your character when I return," said Lotty; "but, at present, tell me which way did Philip go."

"So you would go after him, would you? Take my advice now, and keep out of the way. He was like a demon, my dear; his teeth set, his eyes on fire, his face like a sheet, always a sign of intense passion.—Oh! she is gone, and the right way, too. Well, if she will go, she will, and must take the consequences. I meant to have shewn her quite the contrary direction, if she had persisted in asking me; but, however, I have done my duty, and who can do more? She is a very odd little thing, that Lotty. I am not sure that she is all right, there is such a childish way with her. Yet, with those eyes of hers, how she looks one through, as if she could read everything one was thinking of. However, she is welcome to read my thoughts. Thank goodness! I never say anything that I

don't feel, and that is a comfort everybody cannot boast of."

This wind-up might have been meant for Augusta's ear, who came walking slowly by. If it was, it fell unheeded; she passed the amiable Mrs. Bankes with the air and look of a person who did not seem to know there was such a being in the world, while the latter joined Carry, and the three continued to walk up and down the avenue, Augusta passing, but not joining them, as they conversed.

"Well, Carry, they are queer people here, are they not? all at sixes and sevens."

"Yes," continued Carry; "it is very sad to see them all so occupied with their own concerns: they never look at the baby."

"No, to be sure; they have eyes for nothing but themselves and their husbands. And such husbands, too—perfect brutes! But I always thought Margaret held her head a great deal too high; and Millicent, with all her goodness, has got a nice, uncomfortable lot before her. Those Puseyite sort of husbands think of nothing but their churches and prayer-

books, and are much more alarmed at not following the Rubric than if those belonging to them, and supposed to be near and dear, were going to be eaten up by cannibals. I would not change my dear Fred for one of them."

"Nor I my sweet baby."

"Well, you might pay Mr. Royston the compliment of thinking of him, Carry, for he lets you have all your own way."

"Of course, I would not change him for any of them; and, as you say, Flo., they seem all a very unhappy lot, and, I suppose, it's all their own doing."

"Of course," returned Flo. "If they had acted like you and me, Carry, their fates would have been very different; and that poor little Lotty is worse than all. I declare, when I look at that dark, morose-looking husband of hers, I fully expect to hear some day that he has cut her throat and shot himself."

"Philip Leigh will never hurt himself for any woman," said Augusta, haughtily, as she caught the last words, walking by them.

"I must say, I think he behaved shamefully to you," said Flo.

"It is out of the power of any man to trouble me," retorted Augusta.

"And that's the right way to treat them. As I often tell Fred.—'Ah! you don't know the annoyance, and trouble, and bother you men are. Far better is it for a poor woman just to have no one to care for her but herself.' As Carry and I were just saying, look at those three unhappy creatures, Margaret, Millicent, and Lotty, one worse off than another. I am sure I am thankful I am what I am."

"And so am I," said Carry. "I would not be either of them for the world."

"I am happy in thinking," returned Augusta, "that I envy no one; and I can look on you all with great feelings of compassion, not to say thankfulness, for my own lot."

"Hoity, toity!" exclaimed Flo., as soon as Augusta had walked off, "I smell sour grapes; and no wonder, poor soul! she will come to grief some day, I'll be bound. There's the dressing-bell; run, Carry, or we shall never be in time, and certainly I do like plenty of time to make myself tidy, just to please Fred.; and you'll want to kiss your baby."

CHAPTER XII.

As Lotty passed on her way in search of Philip, she overtook Basil close by a stile. As she lightly sprang over it, he held the hand which he had taken in his to assist her, and staying her onward step, he looked into her face with his loving, brotherly eyes, just as he was wont to do when he lifted up the pretty face to kiss.

"Little Lotty, a shadow in your eyes."

"But not in yours, Basil; at what were you laughing so heartily to yourself?"

"At the unfortunate Mrs. Bankes, Lotty; she is busying herself so much about all our concerns, that a little more and she would

make mischief. Thinking it was best to alarm her in a style she could understand, I was proceeding to give her a quiet, though strong, hint as to the danger of so doing, when the boys interrupted us in a rampant manner, and before I could stop them, threatened the unfortunate Mr. Bankes with a horsepond, a thrashing, and a duel."

"I should think, poor man! he will be off to-morrow."

"Not a bad thing either, Lotty, though my character will suffer through the boys; for by the time Mrs. Bankes reaches London, she will have persuaded herself that I had not only threatened, but actually executed my threats, even though her beloved Frederick is unharmed by her side."

"She must have annoyed you very much, Basil, before you would even give her a strong hint, as you call it."

"She could not annoy me, Lotty; but she may do infinite mischief to those I love, and therefore I was not so vexed as I might have been at my boys' rudeness; it may have the

effect of stopping her. But, Lotty, why is this shadow in your once clear eyes?"

"The shadow will not remain long, I hope, Basil."

"Why did you marry in such haste, Lotty?"

"Anybody will tell you the reason, if you wish to know, Basil."

"Did you not see the sin of marrying without love, little one?"

"I think it was a sin," she said calmly.

He looked into her truthful eyes.

"I forgot I must no longer treat little Lotty as my pet and child; so you must forgive me if I have said aught you do not like."

"You would not say to me, Basil, that which I should not hear; go on, if there is anything you wish to know."

"If you want a brother, may I be the trusted one! not, Lotty, because you have not loving brothers in abundance, but they love you too well, you understand; I should be alone, but the Beauvillians you must consult *en masse*."

"I shall want no help, thank you, Basil, all the same. I have but to do my duty."

He looked at the childish face, the girl's slight form, and might have wondered at her answer; but as he met the stedfast gaze of her eyes, and noted the decision and fortitude that played round her mouth, he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with reverence.

"I believe it; may you have your reward."

Lotty pursued her way, talking to Bear as she went.

"Come, Bear, find Philip. We must be very kind to him. He has been put out by our friend Flo., and we know how aggravating she can be. Even Basil was disturbed, Bear, so Flo. must have been very naughty. Ah! Bear, some of these days we shall all be happy and at rest; but this is a sad time, and worse is coming. We must wait in patience and hope, Bear, preparing for sad things, but doing our duty in everything, steadily, and in a good spirit. We are not Carry and Flo., we are Lotty and Bear, willing to do all we can. So you know where he is, Bear, do

you?—up the dingle? Then let us make haste, it is late. Flo. has been telling Basil tales, which is very naughty. But you are right, Bear, there he is lying on the grass."

Lotty approached Philip, and sat down near him; he was pale as death, and looked as if he had been suffering intense agony; his hand was placed on his side.

"What do you here?" at last he said hoarsely.

"I came for you."

He replied sullenly:

"I am going home."

"Do not move yet, Philip, you may bring on the spasms again."

"How do you know I have had spasms?"

"Because your lips are blue, and your eyes bloodshot."

By degrees Philip divulged that in the race after the two Erle boys, he had brought on palpitation of the heart by over-exertion; he said nothing to Lotty of the rage he had been in.

"We are not above two miles from High

Leigh, shall I go home and send the carriage for you?"

"No!" he said; "we return to Court Leigh; I will not have it said, that those unmannerly boys drove me away."

"They leave to-morrow for good."

"They may go to the devil!" said Philip, gloomily.

While she bathed his hot forehead with the cool spring water, and his heart grew calmer under the touch of her little fingers, why did not Philip say he thanked her for her true wife's duty? He pondered over her conduct, it is true, and at last said to himself: "I dare say she has a motive for thus acting."

Bear rose up and moved further away, as if he were aware of his master's thoughts, and that they were not loyal to his little mistress.

After a time, Philip and Lotty returned slowly home, and the dinner party at Court Leigh passed off much as usual, except that Mrs. Bankes was more quiet, and glanced at Lord Erlscourt when she indulged in any of

her favourite remarks, with a sort of pleasing hope that she was not observed.

Harold was extremely gloomy and unsociable, while Basil and his two boys were full of fun and merriment.

Harold looked from time to time beneath his lowering brows on the fine, frank countenance. The beautiful blue eyes, so serious in a calm mood, so mirthful in a happy one, returned Harold's glances with true brotherly love, and might probably have had a due effect on his moody temperament; but Mr. Herbert was announced, and though he came but to request Margaret's immediate presence at the Rectory, Harold cased himself in an impenetrable cloak of reserve until he left. Then the sweet influence of Margaret's gentle spirit being removed, Harold drank deeply, Mrs. Bankes talked largely, Augusta flirted abominably, Mrs. Royston spent the evening with her child, and Lotty sat by Lady Katherine with the two Erle boys playing at chess under her surveillance.

Basil had accompanied Gerald home.

Lotty was absolutely and advisedly perpetrating a great act of mischief against Lady Katherine, and worse than all, making her the principal actor to her own detriment.

"I trust Margaret may be able to return to-night with a pleasing account of Mrs. Herbert."

"I hope so, Lady Katherine; but I suppose you are aware that if all is safely over, Mr. Herbert means still to take his wife to Italy for a year."

"I heard something of that, my dear."

"It will be better to take her there before the winter, rather than she should risk her precious life in precarious uncertainty here. Though the doctor said she might quite recover after her confinement, still Gerald is prepared."

"Extremely judicious my dear Lotty; but pray with whom does he mean to intrust his parish?"

"That is just the point upon which I thought, Lady Katherine, you could advise. None of us would like a total stranger; so I

have bethought myself of a very nice person with whom we were intimate at Beau-court, and who was once curate in this parish before, Mr. Grey.

"My dear, I remember him; a very pleasing young man."

"He has been rector for some time of a small living, within ten miles of Beau-court. He is everywhere loved and respected; and the people here still remember his name with gratitude and affection, though they have not seen him for ten years."

"Quite the gentleman, I remember he was, my dear. By-the-bye! yes!—now I think of it—a-hem—"

Lady Katherine was beginning to remember too much; so Lotty, like a true match-maker, threw her off the scent, saying—

"He is much more mild and gentle in his doctrines than Gerald; and as the latter does not intend to give him only a curate's salary, but wishes him to have house and tithes, as if he were rector, he will come among us in a very different light to what he was before."

"True, very true. A curate is a curate," said Lady Katherine, "and a rector is a rector. Very handsome of Mr. Herbert, indeed, and as you say, no stranger to us."

"That will be so agreeable to us all," said Lotty; "he will appear like an old friend."

"I have long thought you very sensible, my dear Lotty; and the contrast of last summer's visit to this one, last summer, when all your kind, amiable relations were here, makes me very sad. I feel as we did when His gracious Majesty was, as it were, under a cloud."

"Ah! Brian, take care, Hugh will checkmate you," interrupted Lotty.

"He may do it as often as he likes, provided I may sit by you," said Brian, stoutly.

"Such a contrast, my dear Lotty," continued Lady Katherine. "That is a very vulgar young woman, Mrs. Bankes; she took it upon herself to give me some advice."

"Oh! she is always advising, that woman," said Hugh. "Don't mind her, Lady Kath erine, for she is a fool."

"I do not go quite as far as you, my dear Hugh."

"Oh! but you had far better," interrupted Hugh, "for she is an idiot."

"An idiot! pray, who is an idiot?" said the object of their remarks, who was never two minutes in the same place.

Hugh got very red, and was none the less embarrassed upon seeing that Lady Katherine was dependent upon him to get out of the scrape.

Brian came valiantly to the rescue. "We think those people idiots, who meddle in other people's matters."

"Very true indeed, very sensible remark; that is what I always say to my friends, Lady Katherine; and if any one was to remark how shamefully Augusta is flirting with Sir Harold, I should say, 'Pray, what business is it of yours?' I should, indeed."

"Madam! what do you mean?" said the astounded Lady Katherine.

"Oh! it is as plain to see as the nose on

one's face, what she is after. Margaret away, too, and he quite foolish from wine."

Lady Katherine walked in a stately manner across to where her son sat; she planted herself firmly and decidedly opposite Augusta. The latter blushed deeply, and drew back, while Harold said,—

"Don't go, Augusta, don't leave me, tell me some more about those countries."

"Sir Harold Leigh, your mother sits before you, and she wishes to know whom you call Augusta?"

Harold had sufficient sense left, to discern that his mother was much disconcerted, so he endeavoured to command himself.

Not being accustomed to see men in such a state, Lady Katherine contented herself with keeping strict watch over her son, until her chair was announced, without being aware that Mrs. Bankes's remark had any truth in it. She departed in a most stately rustle of indignation, determining that Court Leigh should be cleared of such company on the morrow.

Lotty looked at Philip after Lady Katherine's

departure, as if to ask his assistance in persuading Harold to retire, and that the party should break up.

He understood her look without showing any inclination to oblige her. "What was it to him how people conducted themselves?" thus said that dark countenance, as he sat in his quiet corner, caring for none, but the little child figure.

Again she appealed to him with a look he had never received from her before.

He grew excited, he would make her come and petition for what she wished, her dark eyes should implore, her sweet lips beseech him to interfere. He knew she only cared thus, because it was her Margaret's husband. He had begun to feel, that only through Margaret could he disturb the sweet content her face usually wore.

But he lost sight of her for a moment, as Mrs. Bankes placed herself right in front of him, to favour him with a flowery description of Lady Katherine's looks and words.

Though he interrupted the interesting story

without an apology, and left Mrs. Bankes, not even muttering an excuse, in vain he looked round the room—Lotty was gone.

"Oh!" said his tormentor, "if you are looking for Lotty, of course she has gone to bed, and high time too, for such a child as that. But I don't intend you to go off after her. Let the poor little thing have her first sleep over before you come in with your curtain lecture."

Mrs. Bankes was getting rampant Margaret, Lord Erlscourt and Lady Katherine all driven off the field, and Augusta giving her such a fine subject for her usual conversation, she would not lose such an opportunity. Mr. Leigh at last should hear her mind.

She rushed into a vortex of mischief, and was in a high state of happiness, at seeing Philip's countenance becoming darker and more morose, when the door opened and Lotty appeared, accompanied by Margaret. Her disordered curls, and glowing cheeks plainly proved to Philip that she had been doing anything but sleeping, while Margaret with serene

joy and happiness, went up to Harold and said,—

"Dear Millicent is safe, and has a little daughter!"

"I care nought about it," said the ungracious husband.

No change took place in Margaret, but with placid manner she continued,—

"I am sure you must be all tired, so I will ring for lights."

CHAPTER XIII.

The morrow was a day of events and consultations. Of the latter, that between Lady Katherine and her son was the longest and most ineffectual, and the one between Lotty and her husband was the shortest and most decisive.

For he said, "Lotty we go home to-day;" and she answered, "Very well, Philip;" and they went. Not, however, before Lotty had her full share of most of the other consultations, including a long dissertation from Mrs. Royston on the subject of teething, and the angelic way in which her baby submitted to that universal plague of mankind. Why providence did not

ordain that they should cut their teeth when they grew up, formed a never-failing subject of discussion and wonder on the part of Mrs. Royston; beginning with the agonies such precious little innocents were made to suffer, the torturing suspense of tender parents while a tooth was coming through, the vast amount of bibs and pinafores damped during the process, and the expense of Mrs. Somebody's soothing syrup, to say nothing of India-rubber rings, &c. &c.

Mrs. Bankes was for taking Augusta roundly to task, which she did for the brief period that the latter allowed her to speak.

"I have always heard that you were celebrated for going great lengths, Augusta, but, for my part, I would never believe it, nor more would Frederick, until we saw what we saw last night. Shameful indeed! and the poor man quite out of himself."

"I have not now to inform you, Mrs. Bankes, that the friendship which subsists between Sir Harold Leigh and myself is warranted by our long acquaintance, to say nothing of my hav-

ing been originally the first object of his affections."

"Fiddle-de-dee! I know much better than that; and besides, to my innocent mind, that is an additional reason why you should be more circumspect. If you must flirt, my dear I will lend you my dear Frederick for an evening, knowing full well that the darling fellow will return to his doting wife more fondly than ever: but to fasten yourself to the side of a man who did not know whether he was talking to a man or a woman—"

"Excuse me, Sir Harold was perfectly aware to whom he was speaking, which I only mention for his sake, as your remarks about myself are—beneath my notice."

"But I think it my duty to tell you what we all think of you, don't we, Lotty?"

"Which it is useless to do, Flo., if she does not think so herself," said Lotty.

"You cannot accuse me of flirting with *your* husband, child," said Augusta, bitterly.

"You are welcome to do so," replied Lotty, quietly.

"Ah! Lotty, you don't know what I know. I was just picking a flower here and there in the garden, and seeing two people in the cedar walk,—"

"Which two people had quite as much right to walk there, as you or I, Flo.," interrupted Lotty, "but good-bye for the present—I must run over to the Rectory, to enquire after Millicent."

Lotty did not look at Augusta as she left the room, and Mrs. Bankes finished her exordium to the chairs and tables.

As Lotty and Margaret walked back together, from the Rectory, they had a consultation which was different from all the others, inasmuch as it began in love and ended so.

"My Queen Meg, we go home to-day."

"Oh! my Lotty."

"Yes, you know you and I are under the laws of the Leighs; you have no wish, neither have I, to dispute their wills."

"Ah, Lotty, a different fate is before me. I must dispute my Harold's, I, who could live only to please him."

"But, Margaret, we could not expect Harold to be good all at once, especially as he does not act for the sake of goodness. Let us do as Hope does."

And Lotty repeated:

"*Her bark upon the quicksands,*
Ten thousand floods o'erwhelm;
Hope looked above, 'This is the time
For God to take the helm.'"

"But should my resolution fail, Lotty?"

"It will not, Margaret, because it has Duty for its father, and Love for its mother. But you will have much to bear."

"I fear nothing, so that my Harold's good name is not tarnished. I think, Lotty, I could bear the loss of his love, rather than know him to be evil thought of."

"And yet it is his love for you, that is his best safeguard at present, Queen Margaret. Somehow the organs of veneration and religion have been doled out to the Leighs in scant measure; pray God we may live to see

that mended, Margaret, then we need fear the visits of Flos. and Augustas, as little as whisks of the wind, or flights of crows; but Queen Margaret—"

"My Lotty!"

"I live near you, but you must make up your mind to think me far off."

"Why? my best, dearest, Lotty!"

"Because, because, the Leighs are rather strange, as you know; they like to keep their own property to themselves."

"Do you mean that Philip will prevent your coming to see me? that living so near I shall not have your dear company, your sweet, wise counsel, your loving face to look upon? Oh! Lotty, he never, never, can be so cruel."

"He does not mean to be cruel, dear Meg, and it may never happen, but I wish you to be prepared, that you may not think your Lotty unkind, unthoughtful. You must know, Queen Margaret, I am the most to blame—I committed the sin of marrying without love; thus I must bear my lot without a murmur; but as I cannot give Philip that love which I

feel in my heart I could give to a husband, I must be the more scrupulous in doing my duty."

"Sweetest, best Lotty! with your child's face and man's wisdom, how you shame me."

"Then you are prepared for Harold's having a reaction, are you, Queen Meg? He has been good a long time, and in the course of nature, one must expect he will now have a bad turn, because his resolutions have no foundation. Can you bear all that is to happen, and know that Lotty, who loves you more than all the rest of the world, is sitting at home and not hovering about you in loving help and sympathy?"

"You will pray for me, Lotty?"

"Faithfully, as I hope for mercy and strength myself. Harold, if left to you and me, we flatter ourselves could be managed; but with that rogue, Price, poor, mistaken Lady Katherine, (really those are very meek words for her perverse want of wisdom), and that uncompromising Gerald, he will be driven into a state

of distraction. He wants money too, does he not?"

"I fear so," said Margaret.

"And I suppose if you were to lessen your establishment by one half, it would be much more comfortable; but Lady Katherine would go into fits, as if the Leighs were born with less of arms, legs, or brains, than other mortals."

"It is quite true, Lotty, a large establishment swallows up money in so great, yet so unsatisfactory a way, that I long to live in a cottage, where waiting on my Harold myself, love would be the only wages asked, and love should be the only paymaster."

"If it were not for Lady Katherine, I should think Harold would soon see the expediency of such a thing."

"Harold wishes to leave Court Leigh, everything, and settle abroad."

"I should much prefer an honourable economy at home," said Lotty; "a few ill-natured people might wonder, but the blessing of it, the good, the example—besides, I should ima-

gine it was a mistaken notion, that of living cheaper abroad; a person of extravagant habits will be extravagant in Siberia—But here is Basil, and the two boys are close behind; they have come to bid us farewell, I suppose."

"Basil lingered by Margaret's side, as if he saw traces of a hidden grief in her countenance, while the boys uproariously lamented to Lotty, that she was not going with them.

"Why should you stop at home with that Philip Leigh, who never speaks a word to you?" said Brian.

"And we would never leave you a moment alone," said Hugh.

"That would be too much of a good thing, Hugh," said Lotty.

"I meant you should never be dull with us," said Hugh."

"I do not think I am dull anywhere," returned Lotty.

"No, that you are not; and I only know if I were king of the universe, I would have no woman born who is not like you."

"Then you would have too much of a good thing."

"We could never have too much of you, and Basil thinks so too; and though we are going a voyage in the 'Ripple,' yet we are quite sorrowful to leave you."

"And I am in sorrow about another thing," said Hugh. "I should like to have kicked Mr. Bankes, before I went."

"Why? poor, unfortunate, meek man!" said Lotty.

"Just to astonish Mrs. Bankes," returned Hugh.

"I did not know you were such bad boys."

"We are not very bad boys, for we went this morning and kissed Milly's baby, which nurse said showed we were kind-hearted boys; but, Mrs. Leigh, when I kissed the baby I said something to Hugh."

"What was it?"

"Shall I tell, Hugh?"

"Yes, you may as well, Brian, because, perhaps, she will," whispered Hugh.

"I said, I wished I might kiss you instead of the baby."

"Whenever I have any kisses to give, you two shall have them."

"Thank you! when do you think that will happen?" said Hugh.

"That is more than I can say."

"But you are always kissing Bear," said Brian.

"Because no one else does."

"Then no one shall kiss me but you, if you will treat me the same."

"Come, come, do not let us have any more such childish nonsense," said Lotty. "I think you both very fine boys, and I like you both very much, and that you can believe without any saluting."

"Ah!" said Brian, sorrowfully; "it is all that Philip."

"What is all this sighing and groaning about, eh?" said Basil.

"Mrs. Leigh will not give us each a kiss, now that we are going away, and may be drowned or shipwrecked."

"You impudent boys! how could you think of making such a request to Mrs. Leigh, Mrs. Bankes, or Miss Clare, now?"

"Ha, ha! brother, we will give you all our share, should such ever fall to our lot; but we will keep Mrs. Leigh's."

"No, no," said Basil, "the man who has a right to salute Mrs. Leigh's cheek, knows his happiness, and values it too well to share it."

"You are one, more foolish than another," pouted Lotty.

CHAPTER XIV.

PHILIP LEIGH returned home. "Now I shall begin seriously," said he to himself, "to work my will."

Lotty was always in the habit of rising with the sun. The fresh beauty of the young day was like life to her frame, the deep stillness of the yet sleeping earth raised her soul to the confines of Heaven, from whence came the roseate harbingers of the sun.

This time was to Lotty what happy dreams are to the sick and weary. She gathered in fresh spirit and resolution for the duties of the day, as the Israelites of old gathered their manna.

Many a kind action, many a timely visit did Lotty pay during these early hours, making the poor people think that one of the ministering angels, that watch and guard the dwellings of men at night, had forgotten to seek her place in Heaven, when day revealed the secrets of earth.

And she would appear at breakfast, her clear skin glowing with the pink hue of the pearl shell, her eyes like glittering dew-drops, her whole appearance so fresh and fragrant, that Philip felt as she sat opposite his dark, moody countenance, that she would deem herself more unmatched with him than ever. So he forbade the early excursions.

In vain Bear's impatient whine was heard, now at the door, now below the window, now at the gate; his lazy, little mistress was in bed.

In perceiving that this prohibition really had an effect upon Lotty's spirits, Philip lost sight of the danger to her health. She had said, in her usual quiet manner, "Very well, Philip."

And while he rejoiced that it seemed to tame her, or rather subdue her, he did not know that he was depriving her of life.

Lotty grew pale, then languid; then she lay, when not wanted by Philip, on the grass, on a sofa, anywhere, so that it was recumbent. Bear was, without doubt, a miserable dog; and while no word escaped Lotty's lips of either complaint or remonstrance, Bear expressed, in canine language, that he was on the verge of distraction. How long Philip, in his blind selfishness, might have continued the experiment, cannot be known. But Lotty's nurse interfered.

Having been born and bred among the Beauvillians, it never entered her innocent and unsuspecting heart, that there lived people who not only could, and did, torment their fellow-creatures, but who plagued those they loved best.

She concluded that this new arrangement proceeded from a whim of her nurseling's; and finding all her private remonstrances to her (as well they might be) unavailing, she

thought it but right to appeal to Mr. Leigh herself.

"Eh! Mr. Leigh, but she is the pet of the world, for all she is so wilful. If you don't lay the law of a husband on her, she will slip through our fingers."

"Of whom are you speaking, my good woman?"

"Of Miss Lotty, sir," said nurse, angrily, and advisedly oblivious of her married condition. "Don't you see how ill she is?"

"I have noticed she looks a little pale lately, but thought it was the heat."

"It is no such thing, Mr. Leigh, it is all her own fault, for not getting in the fresh air of a morning; all the Beauvilliers' family are the same. The fresh morning air is meat, drink, and life to them. And look at the change in only a fortnight come Tuesday."

"Pooh—pooh!" said Philip, "old nurses' tales."

"Old nurses' tales, indeed! then just call her to come to you, from under that tree where she is now lying. If she comes to you with

the step she had ten days ago, I never nursed her."

"Pooh—pooh!" said Philip, again; but he called her.

She looked round, as if she only half heard him.

"Ay! ay! she would have been by your side ere this, ten days ago," said nurse.

He called again, quicker and sharper in tone, for he really feared.

She rose hastily, and seemed as if about to run, but her step faltered; she held out her arms as if to catch something, and feeling the faithful, loving Bear, she clasped him close, half-sinking on the ground. Philip flew to her, the nurse following. With half-closed eyes, and white parted lips, lay that loveliest, fairest thing.

"She has fainted," said the nurse. "Don't touch her," as Philip wildly tried to clasp her in his arms; "the dog will do you a mischief. I will get some water; see, she is better already. Here, fan her with her hat, but do not unclasp her hands from the

dog's neck, for your life. I know how he took on, when she was so ill, after her father's death."

As Philip looked at the innocent victim of his selfish caprice, he could have sworn her a lifetime of devotion and love, so that she would but look at him once. It seemed as if, even in a fainting fit, Lotty must obey his wishes, for she opened her eyes, and looked at him. He poured out upon her the fondest, tenderest words.

At last she said,

"I rose too quickly, Philip; it made me giddy."

"But why are you thus weak and ill?—oh, Lotty! my Lotty!"

"I do not know, Philip, but perhaps I am going to die."

"Die! Lotty; die! ah, Lotty!"

"I feel as if I should, Philip."

"Oh! Lotty, talk not thus; you agonize me. Death can never touch one so fair as you."

"I shall go to my father, Philip," said Lotty, quickly, and with a faint smile.

Philip's heart beat with the strange fluttering sensation he had felt twice before. He put his hand to his side—his lips became blue.

She would prefer death to living with him. That was all he had gained by his late experiment.

"Nurse, give Philip some water first; see, his heart beats so, and that might bring on spasms."

Lotty was never again forbidden to seek the heaven's nutriment her peculiar frame required. She got as rapidly strong again, as she had become ill.

Philip went to consult a doctor about his heart; who told him there was no disease at present, but he must avoid all violent emotions, to prevent any return of spasms. And this advice was given to a man who never gave his heart a moment's peace or holy calm.

CHAPTER XV.

While Philip was enacting the part of a tender and judicious husband at High Leigh, Harold was keeping up the same character at Court Leigh.

Their visitors had departed. Mrs. Bankes having declared, in a private consultation with her husband, that they had all become more stupid than owls now that Lotty was gone, made her dear Frederick declare, that urgent business called him to London.

Mrs. Royston was beginning to think that the air of Cheshire did not suit the operation of teething; besides, the Leighs lived five miles from the nearest medical man—a fact

that had kept poor Mrs. Royston in a perpetual state of alarm—and many times had the unwilling young 'Squire to go the last thing at night to the stables, to desire a man and horse to be kept in readiness, at a moment's notice, in consequence of some unusual symptoms of uncomfortableness on the part of young Master Royston.

"Though," as Carry declared to her husband, "it was only one word for their baby, and two for Margaret's, who, she was certain, would have a fit that night, it looked so remarkably redundant in health and spirits."

Augusta still remained, but she was only waiting an escort to London. The same train could not have held her and Mrs. Bankes, without an explosion; or, as Mr. Bankes elegantly expressed it, "their coming to bats." Harold seemed, after his steady pursuit of active and worthy habits, to have become, all at once, an exaggerated edition of his former self. In vain the devoted Margaret tried every winning way, made use of every wife-like art, to subdue his morose, unkind mood. Brooding

over his want of money, and the dilemma he had placed himself in, by commencing so vigorously the repair of his estate, without counting the cost, he, like many men before him, laid the blame of his present unfortunate condition on another. And that other was his wife.

Margaret had been the originator, the instigator, the adviser, the encourager of it all. And Margaret would not listen to his wishes to give all up, and go with him to any other world than that which contained Court Leigh. And this was that same Margaret who, early in their married life, deprecated his departure from her side but an hour, even for what he deemed necessary; who had thought that the world, including their tenants and people in particular, might dissolve into emptiness and vapour, sooner than that her Harold should be annoyed. It needed no poisonous whisperer by his side to make Margaret appear at this time a stumbling-block in the way of his happiness and content.

In the heat of some of his arguments, he

had told her of his banker's account. "Sell some out-lying estate to clear the rest," said Margaret.

It was all entailed.

"Let us reduce our establishment," she suggested. But in this plan she met with most strenuous opposition from Lady Katherine. This stern but amiable old lady had deemed it no more than her bounden duty to keep ward and watch all day long while Augusta remained at Court Leigh; and as she imagined that nothing was ever done or said that she ought not to have a voice in the matter, she had arrived at a much greater knowledge of her son's affairs than he ever intended she should. But he was not ill-pleased when he found she sided with him against his wife, in the matter of reducing their establishment.

"Court Leigh had ever been kept up in a style that no family in Cheshire could exceed," said she.

"But there is no reason why we should do so, dear Lady Katherine," pleaded Margaret.

"Such state as we keep, does not add to our happiness, but rather increases our cares."

"It could never be reported in the country that the Leighs did such a thing; it would be my death-blow," said Lady Katherine.

"Nay," answered sweet Margaret, "what is the country to us, if we are in debt? Every year will but add to our difficulties, until the end will be worse than what we fear now."

"For my part, I cannot conceive how such a state of things has occurred," said Lady Katherine. "Price must have been grossly deficient in his duties towards you, my dear son, and I can only advise you to make him refund."

"He says I am in debt to him five thousand pounds, mother," said Harold.

"Monstrous!" said his mother, "quite monstrous! I would have him taken up and put into gaol until he confessed the whole matter."

Lady Katherine's advice and ideas upon the subject by no means tended to lighten it in any way. No baby could be more ignorant of the

real case, and no queen more resolute to keep her state and crown, though it was clear to others she had neither.

Margaret grew pale and sorrowful, but the soft eyes never varied in their look of devoted love; the sweet lips could utter no words but endearing persuasions to act with firm and upright decision. And she was alone in her thorny path; no Basil to encourage the wayward Harold; no Millicent to bid her work on in faith and hope; no sweet Lotty to soothe, encourage, and point out some happy medium path.

Margaret sat in her garden by the newly-made grave of Harold's favourite—that petted and beloved horse, which had, by its traits of instinct and affection, first won for Harold the glance of the eyes and interest in the heart of the sweetest, gentlest being on earth. The horse had died from inflammation, caused by being over-ridden. His death was sufficient grief to Harold, without being told by Mr. Herbert that his own passionate mood had prompted

the mad gallop, his own temper had inflicted this fresh grief.

Harold had shut himself up, after a series of insulting epithets poured upon Gerald, that made the latter mourn over the wretched change, and had not been seen since.

Margaret had desired the servants to bury the favourite in the sweetest spot of her garden; and when the last sod was placed over him, she came in lonely silence to ask God, from her heart, to spare her this bitter cup. So pure, so devoted was her love for Harold, that she asked for no return of his love to her, but that he should perform his duty to God and his people. Anything she could bear towards herself, so that he was irreproachable in character and name.

She felt arms thrown round her, and sweet kisses given her.

"My Lotty!"

"Queen Margaret, how ill you look!"

"And you also, Lotty. It is three weeks since I have seen you—oh, my sweet Lotty!" And Margaret wept uncontrollable tears.

"Dear Meg! weep on, it will relieve you. I know my school-wife has been very unhappy and you know you can pour out your sorrows to your little school-husband without fear."

No, not even to that little, faithful school-husband could the loyal wife utter one word against Harold.

"I feel low and out of spirits, Lotty."

"When does Harold go? I hear he intends trying 'The Marguerite' this summer."

"He leaves on Monday, after the rent-day; but he will not take a long excursion this year."

"Do you go with him?"

"No, dear; it is deemed unwise for me to do so, because, you know, sweet Lotty, your little god-daughter is coming soon."

"How soon, Margaret?"

"I suppose, in two months, dear."

"How unlucky that you should have all this to undergo at such a time; and I—ah! Queen Margaret, I have but come to say farewell!"

"How, Lotty?"

"Philip is going abroad."

"When, and for how long, and where, dearest Lotty?"

"I know nothing more than that we go to-morrow; where, or for how long, I am ignorant. But you will have Milly, darling Meg," continued Lotty, her own tears falling as she saw Margaret's despair.

"Lotty, where you are, there always seems to me less of sin and the world's deceit. Though I have seen so little of you lately, it was pleasant to think I had but to send for you—it was more than pleasant, it was my best worldly comfort. Well, if more must be borne, God grant me strength to bear it! As you say, I shall have dear Milly; and, Lotty, she is recovering wonderfully; Dr. Murray has scarcely any fears. But, Lotty, my sweetest, dearest Lotty, my cares are doubled. When you go, it seems as if some goodness left me."

"Well, it is a great comfort to be so missed," said Lotty, with an attempt at cheerfulness; "so now come with me, to bid Lady Katherine and Pru. farewell, and the dear Milly.

When I am away, I shall be writing for ever, and have a great deal to tell you. And as I may go to some unknown scenes and places, you may amuse yourself with publishing my interesting and original documents, and saving up any emolument that you may gain thereby for my god-daughter." Thus Lotty chatted on, and no one would have believed that the little, lively thing bore within her a heart that ached more than all.

Lotty knew Philip Leigh had a purpose in this sudden arrangement, and in taking her from England, her friends, her companions—not even permitting her nurse to go with her, in giving her no clue to his plans, no explanation of his intentions, she defined that her fortitude and patience were to be put to some severe test—some extraordinary trials. To her tender, loving nature, the leaving Margaret was sufficient to almost tear her heart in sunder.

CHAPTER XVI.

Though Philip had given Lotty but twenty-four hours' notice, during which time she had to make her leave-taking visits, and to reconcile her dear old nurse to her absence—a very difficult task, and not completed either—she and Bear were ready at the appointed hour.

"I am not going to be troubled with that dog."

For a moment Lotty turned white. Then recovering on the instant, she kissed him between the eyes, and sprang into the carriage.

They were to go to Liverpool, eighteen miles, in their own carriage.

Whether in that last kiss Lotty had given

Bear any private instructions, could not be ascertained; but on arriving at the hotel which they usually frequented, the first object that greeted their sight was Bear.

And Lotty seemed in no degree surprised. Philip waited until they were in the sitting-room, and then, in a loud and angry voice, he swore he would send the dog back. Bear growled as he heard the angry tones.

Philip struck him sharply with a riding-whip.

Instantly the dog sprang up, with a howl of rage, but not quicker than Lotty, who, placing herself in front of her husband, received the huge form of Bear on her slight figure, every bristle raised, his eyes of a glaring red.

Philip shuddered as he saw those sharp, glistening fangs, within an inch of the small, white throat, and knew that, when blinded with rage, such bloodhounds as Bear, saw not friend from foe.

"Ah! Bear, be good; is this like a gentle-

man? are these your manners? would you hurt poor Lotty?"

The bristles fell, the tail drooped; Bear turned away his huge jaws, his eyes assumed a penitent and subdued look, and with a whine of apology, he crouched at the feet of his little mistress.

"The dog is far too savage to be loose," said Philip; "I'll have his proud spirit curbed with the whip."

"No, Philip, you must not beat him, for then you will indeed make him savage."

"As soon as Ross has done his horses, I'll have the hound chained up, and a good flogging will teach him not only obedience, but better manners."

Lotty looked at Philip with the first symptoms of defiance he had ever seen in her eyes towards him. And he was not much mistaken in reading contempt there also. But he left the room to issue his orders; and when he returned, after the lapse of an hour, he found Lotty prepared for the dinner that had been ordered for them, and Bear sleeping

quietly under the sofa. Lotty was pale, but her eyes dark and brilliant.

"Send my servant here," said Philip, to the waiter.

"You must not have my dog beaten," said Lotty, calmly.

"I intend to have him beaten," said Philip, coldly.

"I would rather that you shot him, Philip."

"I see no use in that, Lotty. I mean but to tame him."

"That is not true, Philip, you know; with a nature like a hound's, you ruin him if you beat him."

"We will see about that," said Philip, "after the operation is over. He can then be shot if he proves worthless."

"He shall be shot before he is beaten," said Lotty; "here are your pistols. I have got them ready."

As she handed him one of the pistols, her cheek grew paler, her eyes darker and more resolute; she held the other in her hand.

The servant was heard approaching.

"Come here, Bear," said Lotty.

The noble hound was by her side as she spoke.

"Will you shoot my dog, if you do not like him, Philip, rather than have him beaten?"

"No, he shall be flogged."

"Then I shoot him myself," said Lotty.

Philip heard the click of the lock; she placed the pistol to the loving dog's ear, who was looking up at her with pleased intelligence.

"Keep to one side," she said. "Now, my Bear, farewell. You take Lotty's heart with you."

An irresistible impulse to give him one more kiss, saved Bear's life.

Philip caught her hand.

"I did not know you were such a fool about the dog. He shall not be flogged."

"On your word, Philip?"

"On my word."

She took his hand, looked at it for a moment, and then said, "Thank you, Philip." Still holding the hand, she continued: "Is

Bear to go home with Ross, or remain with us?" As Philip hesitated to reply, she said:

"I am afraid, Philip, he will find us out, wherever we are."

"Then take him with you."

"Thank you, Philip," and she touched his hand with her lips.

Her face resumed its usual colour, and her pretty, playful manner returned; she and Bear had quite a scene of love and adoration, enacted in whispers and dumb show.

Presently Lotty rose, and bringing Philip a glass of water, asked him, if his heart pained him.

"A little," he allowed.

In fact, this strange, wayward man, thus battling with his own happiness, was contending with several very different emotions. He was baffled, and she victorious. That went against the grain. He was really irritated against the dog, and his unkind nature longed to inflict punishment, no matter what effect it had upon him.

But the resolute, beautiful daring of the child-like thing, the ease and fearless way in which she handled the pistols, and the determined courage with which she prepared to destroy the creature she loved so well, rather than have it suffer, excited his warmest admiration. And then the simple earnestness with which she said, "Thank you, Philip," the unsolicited touch of her lips, though but upon his hand, sent the blood rushing wildly through his heart, with a feeling of ecstacy he could scarce define himself. For amid all the love he bore the little child-wife, yet stronger rose the spirit of pride and self-will within him. This was the life he had longed for, this the excitement that was to colour his days with alternate visions of clouds and rosy skies, and which was to indemnify him for having placed himself at all within the dull noose of matrimony. And yet strong must be the love which caused that proud heart to throb thus, though he could say to himself, "I will let her keep the dog; through

his means I may gain greater hold over that wild spirit."

That he could love thus, yet think thus, gave him an insight into his feelings, that puzzled and provoked him by their strangeness.

CHAPTER XVII.

The good angels appointed to guide the steps of the Leighs, must have abandoned their posts — gloomy and irascible was the heretofore indolent Harold. In vain Margaret became, in her loving wife's duty, so sweet, so gentle, so thoughtful, the essence of a dozen Margarets seemed to emanate from her. Harold neither looked at nor spoke to her. What mattered it to him if she was good and amiable, and loving beyond all compare, she yet would not give way in one thing. "The Marguerite" was her rival; as such, Margaret hated her with a cordial, honest dislike, that never swerved amid all her gentleness. The

more Harold grew to know that she was immovable, the more did he harden his heart, and elevate "the Marguerite" to the highest place in his regard, and consequently her rival fell in proportion. Like Philip, he fed and nourished himself on this excitement, he loved to think himself a victim: he grew enamoured of the struggle, wotting little, in this strange charm of novelty, whether he was right or wrong; Margaret should give way, should learn to like, to live in, to make a home of her rival. When she had spent a year with him cruising about the lovely shores of the Mediterranean, then he would give way. Margaret might take her rival, sell her, burn her, destroy every vestige and trace of her, she alone should reign Queen Margaret as heretofore. But he would have his own way first.

On the rent-day, all went well. The tenants were loud in their expressions of gratitude for all that their landlord had been lately doing for them, and with a good feeling, very often seen in that class, appeared to a man, and

what was of more consequence, every man seemed to make it a point of honour to have no arrears. Every farthing was paid down with cheerful alacrity, every old debt settled. It should be through no fault of theirs, if their young landlord was discouraged in his present good course.

If Harold had been in a better mood, he could not have failed to be touched by the exhibition of feelings until now unknown tohim.

But his first act on the following morning was to desire that one half of the proceeds of the rent-day should be sent to certain agents at Cowes, for the payment of "the Marguerite." Part he had already paid, and this last sum would complete her purchase. In vain Mr. Price expostulated, in vain Messrs. Moneypenny threatened, in vain they all called upon Lady Leigh to use her influence. That soft pleading, those gentle entreaties, became as so much oil on the raging flames, and he made but little other answer than an order for his servant to pack up, and an offer to Miss Clare to escort her to Cowes.

While Margaret mourned over the one deed, Lady Katherine boiled over the other, and after the most approved manner of courtly fashion, gave her son the benefit thereof.

It did not lessen the evil feelings filling his heart, that the forbearing Margaret had every reason to complain, yet said nothing, while the indignant Lady Katherine had in reality nothing on which to found her accusations, yet railed herself into a belief of their truth.

So, with a stern, haughty composure covering his inward rage, Harold proceeded, for the second time since they were married, to bid his Margaret farewell. One cold kiss he gave her, but a little sting of remorse penetrated his heart, as she held up his boy, saying, with her eyes: "At least give him my kisses, for I can take them from him when you leave him." He clasped the boy in his arms, kissed him many times, lovingly and fondly, and caught, as he gave him back to Margaret, that look of love and devotion her eyes knew so well how to express, while a

flush of pleasure tinged her pure cheek with more loveliness than usual. All the leave he took of his mother was a haughty bow, as he seated himself in the carriage by Miss Clare's side, both of which acts made her bridle up with supreme indignation and disgust. But Margaret caught a last look, as the carriage turned up the avenue, and was comforted.

Like the Egyptian king, Harold tried to harden his heart the whole journey; but that loving glance melted down the granite thing whenever he thought of it, and he arrived at Cowes almost in an amiable mood. It even crossed his mind he would write to Margaret. Miss Clare had been amiable and kind, and rational. Indeed, she always took care not to offend Harold's real feelings of honour and rectitude, when quite himself. And therefore, in some measure he may be excused thinking her not so bad as she was painted to him; for he never remembered what happened on certain evenings.

She invited him to live at her brother's house, until "the Marguerite" was ready, which

offer he gladly accepted. And she knew that her welcome there would be much warmer, bringing a rich young Baronet in her hand. For much might be made out of him in various ways; besides the consequence it would give to have such a guest residing with a falling family, a tarnished name.

The "Marguerite" was a very handsome schooner screw yacht, exactly suited for the ocean home of a family, being between two to three hundred tons burden. Harold was soon absorbed in all the bustle and pleasure of fitting her out. He had only two drawbacks to his happiness; he really wanted Margaret, and, in spite of his anger, felt he could enjoy nothing without her. And secondly, Mrs. Bankes was in Cowes, and he stumbled over her at all corners. She did not mend his mood by the remarks with which she favoured him whenever they met.

"So you and Augusta are going off together, are you," says she; "well, I hope you are prepared to leave your characters behind you. People will talk, you know, all I can

say, and they wonder Lady Leigh allows such things. Poor soul! say I, she cannot help herself, she is tied by the leg.—Bless me! he is gone; well to be sure, how his eyes flashed. For my part, spite of Lord Erlscourt, I think those Leighs are mad. It would be doing no more than my duty to give Margaret a hint of how matters are going on here. Though it is of no use writing to her, I declare I'll give a hint to that poor little old maid, Miss Leigh; she will tell her mother directly, though I dare say the old lady opens all her letters first, to see that none are from lovers. No fear of that—ha, ha! poor old soul! However, I will write; it is my duty to prevent any evil occurring to my dear school-fellow; Fred, I know, will be quite angry with me if I don't. I hear they start for Jersey to-morrow, a large party of them. A great shame, Fred and I were not asked. I have been wishing to go that identical trip for so long, and I am a more proper chaperon for Augusta, than her gay sister-in-law. In fact, I don't think any of the party have much to boast of, in the

way of discreetness; and now I think of it, I feel sure my dear Fred would not like to see me mixed up with such a questionable lot. And I shall tell Miss Leigh that is the reason I did not accompany them, otherwise my feelings for my dear Margaret would have made me sacrifice everything to oblige her—&c. &c. !"

Mrs. Bankes's soliloquies never ended, apparently.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Margaret was writing to her Harold; forgetful of his late unkindness, regardless of his cold farewell, unmindful of his injustice, she was pouring out her heart's warmest, best feeling to assuage the grief he must feel, on hearing a bitter piece of news. Price had absconded with all that was left of the half-year's rents, and with whatever other matters of value he could lay his hands upon.

Sir Harold's absence had enabled him to mature his plans. He went from his house to Liverpool with the ostensible purpose of placing the rents in Messrs. Moneypenny's hands, but had taken advantage of a vessel

going straight to the gold-diggings, and had been gone four days, ere the fact was discovered.

"My Harold, let me come to you," wrote the fond wife. "It will, indeed, be as well for us to leave home for a year, that we may at once put an end to the drain of our large establishment: we can no longer contend, love, against the tide of our ill-fortune. But let us face the evil calmly, for it is not hopeless. Messrs. Moneypenny have been here. They are willing, nay, most anxious to accommodate us in every way. They will, with your permission, appoint a trustworthy agent of their own, who will manage the estates with zeal and care. They promise to proceed with the repairs, appropriating a third of the rents for that purpose. They will reserve another third for themselves, to pay off the incumbrance due to them, and give us the last portion, on which to live: surely, dear Harold, we can live in luxury and content upon two thousand, three hundred and thirty pounds a-year, and even less—"

She had reached this point of the letter, her lovely face beaming with the thought, that with him, half that sum would be sufficient for her, when the door opened. Mr. Herbert entered; his usually calm and thoughtful face was flushed and agitated, while a solemn pity beamed from his eyes. Clasping the hand she held out to him, he breathed a low prayer for strength and fortitude, "that he might tell, and she might hear, what God had appointed them."

"My Harold!" exclaimed Margaret.

He bowed in assent.

"Not dead?" she whispered, in a tone that seemed to Gerald like the sigh of some mournful, imprisoned spirit.

"'Twere better had he been taken from us," he answered.

A low, deep sigh, half a sob, escaped from Margaret; she was relieved from the worst fear.

"I am ready; tell me."

"He has gone—he has fled from England,

he has left every duty, every tie; for, Lady Leigh, he is not alone."

"It is a mistake," answered Margaret, calmly.

"I fear not," said Gerald, mournfully. "Lady Katherine knows more than we do; she has had letters to confirm what is now in the newspaper. It was she bade me come to you, it was at her wish—"

"The paper," asked Margaret, still and calm as stone, holding her hand out for it.

Awed by her manner, he gave it to her. Scarcely disguising names, in broad hints, and pointed allusions, with vulgar remarks and family facts, lay exposed to Margaret's swimming vision, an implied elopement of Sir Harold Leigh and Miss Clare. The yacht "Marguerite," family embarrassments, defalcation of agent, private affairs, misunderstandings and quarrels, a mixture of slight truth and monstrous falsehood, burnt themselves, like letters of fire into Margaret's heart. That name, her Harold's name to be thus blasted—that character, her Harold's fine, frank character, to be thus

vilified—She drew herself up to her full height, she turned upon Gerald her glowing face, radiant with a noble purity, while from her eyes beamed an indignation so virtuous and exalted, he bent his stern soul before it.

The beauty of mercy, the depth of holy pity, the wonderful strength of compassionate love, rose before his mental vision. He stood humble and abashed at his rigid sternness, his cold judgment of a fellow-mortal. He felt like the servant who owed his Lord ten thousand talents, and was frankly forgiven that enormous debt. Yet was he not exacting the hundred pence from a weak, erring fellow-servant?

"Forgive me!" he exclaimed.

"Thank you, Gerald," answered Margaret; "now you must help me to clear my Harold's name."

"Command me. Let me go to Cowes; entrust me with the discovery of the author of such slanders."

"I will go with you; yes, Gerald, who so

proper to greet the eyes of one injured in so tender a point, as his wife? On landing, Harold might hear some odious whisper, he will raise his eyes in indignation, and behold his Margaret, and then—" she paused.

Gerald looked up, a deadly paleness overspread the late glowing features; a pang of mortal agony and pain sent the blood shuddering through her frame. He caught her, as she faltered.

It might be that the many fears and trials of the past few months had weakened her, it might be the one sudden shock, which, on a frame so sensitive, affected body and mind alike. As her agony passed away and her colour returned, she said, — "Give me my letter—I must write, write instead; ring for my maid, Gerald." She wrote rapidly, adding a few fond, loving sentences to her former letter.

"Now go, Gerald, take my Harold this letter, tell him the cause that prevents me being with you, and in my coming hour of

peril, oh! Gerald, remember, no pang of bodily anguish that I shall endure, will equal the mental pain I suffer, until my Harold's name is cleared."

"God do so to me, and more also, if I wrong him again," said Gerald. "I will now go and undeceive Lady Katherine."

"Thanks, thanks," she could say no more. In the bustle and confusion always consequent upon an event occurring unexpectedly, many necessary and proper precautions were forgotten; or perhaps Margaret's constitution was really weakened by her late trials. But from whatever cause, Lotty's little god-daughter was born in such an hour of pain and danger, that the poor mother heard not her first cries; she lay for many hours, wholly unconscious, her spirit hovering between life and death.

Gerald had failed to convince Lady Katherine, who, after writing to her son, had established herself by Margaret's unconscious side, while he proceeded to Cowes.

CHAPTER XIX.

Lady Katherine had, at first, sat down stunned, as it were, with the fulfilment of her fears. Then she awoke to the fact, that she must act in a becoming and proper manner for the occasion. She called to mind all the occasions in which the blessed Queen Charlotte had been placed in somewhat similar circumstances, through the unbridled and notorious habits of her own princely sons.

Ever anxious to act, on all occasions, after the manner of her august example, if it unhappily fell out she was to do so under such painful circumstances, still she would do it. Her son had disgraced the name of Leigh—

he was her son no longer. He had outraged every feeling of love and duty to both his wife and herself; therefore, he must be considered as dead to both of them until—

Here Lady Katherine paused. An idea shot through the obtuseness of her mind, that Harold was her son after all—her only son. Her life would be almost, if not quite, a blank without him. Nevertheless, the world would expect her to act in a becoming manner; at least, she must show she had not had the advantage of a great and high example without being able to profit thereby. So, in grand and magnanimous language, she indited a letter to her son. She painted in high colours the crimes of which she presumed him guilty; she forbade him her sight, until time, remorse, and proper feelings should urge him to seek her forgiveness. She should interdict his name, hitherto so beloved, now so stained, being mentioned to her. She darkly hinted at his wife's horror and indignation leading to separation, perhaps divorce; and, winding up with

an heroic finale, she commended him to the powers of outraged Heaven.

Lady Katherine read her letter over to herself, in pleasing approbation of the pith and force of her words, and then sealing and sending it, she proceeded to give Gerald the audience he was craving, receiving him with the air of a Roman mother, and the dignity proper for the late bed-chamber-woman of good Queen Charlotte to show.

Mr. Herbert found it vain to reason with her. He thought it best to proceed at once to Cowes, and act as he knew Margaret would wish. So sending Lady Katherine in a bustle to her daughter's bed-side, thanking God for the mercy that had opened his heart, and freed him from a crime such as Lady Katherine's appeared now to him, he took leave of his Milly, and departed.

At Cowes he found Basil, already working zealously in the same cause. To no one could they exactly trace the origin of the rumour. Some said the character of the Clares warranted it; others, it seemed strange that Sir

Harold should have left his wife and consorted with such people; while one and all declared, upon their honour, they had never spread such reports. Loudest among these was Mrs. Bankes; and while the good Gerald took her at her word, the more worldly-wise Basil alarmed her so much with his hints and remarks regarding the punishment due to the authors of such slanders, that she packed up her things and left Cowes forthwith. Her fears got the better of her curiosity; dying, as she was, with anxiety to witness the denouement of the affair, she persuaded her dear Fred. that they should glean much better accounts from the papers, and that, at all events, it was desirable they should avoid getting dragged into the mess. To this "dear Fred." readily agreed.

Meantime, at the back of the island, in a snug little bay, was the object of all their hopes, thoughts, and wishes. The "Marguerite" had returned from her cruise in the Channel Islands, and to please Miss Clare and her companions, perhaps also himself, Harold

had consented to coast round the island ere they finally landed.

The effect of the short voyage he had taken, rivetted in Harold's heart the chains of the "Marguerite" over him. But the constant intercourse such close companionship as a vessel brought him into with his present guests, was a counterbalance.

Exquisite was the sensation of gliding over the fair but solemn sea, holding in its vast green bosom such hoards of mysteries, such countless lives, such boundless riches, and such mighty powers! But the light laughter of an uncongenial spirit jarred upon Harold's nerves. His gay, fluttering companions thought this object of his love and veneration was merely the sea, who might prove very disagreeable, and make them feel ill, and look so. Now, with Margaret, this would be different.

In the night-time, when he gazed on the stars, looking down, as it were, on a firmament as clear as their own, and enriched with stars even to the smallest fraction of a sparkle to the like amount, what answer could he get

from one of his companions to the solemn thoughts arising within him? The rattle of the dice-box below in the cabin, the wild song, the hasty language, were all he could hope for. With Margaret he might have interchanged thoughts that would have drawn them still closer together. So, with all his late feelings softening towards her, he would pace the deck half the night, and think of nothing but his Margaret. An irresistible impulse induced him to write to her, and post the letter at Jersey.

After giving her an account of his journey, whom he had with him, what they intended doing, he wound up thus:—

"And now, sweet Meg, take those kisses from your boy. They are yours, and yours only. Forgive your wayward Harold. Remember that one such look as you gave me, when we parted, revenges you well. I see in the stars, now above me, two such angel lights, that seem to tell me what a brute I am. And up from the bosom of the sea come liquid, soft glances, saying, 'Cruel Harold!' 'Tis in

vain that I close my eyes, trying to shut out the remembrance of your last look. It haunts me, sweet wife; may it do so ever! Then, when I return home, Queen Margaret shall say she has no more loving subject than her

"HAROLD."

Margaret had been ill and insensible three days when this letter arrived at Court Leigh.

So Harold returned to the Isle of Wight in a softened and kind mood; and though he might have felt anxious to return home, he put into Newtown late one evening, with the full determination of taking his guests all round the coast, as he had promised. But he sent his servant over to Cowes for his letters, with orders to be with him as early as possible in the morning. The man brought but one, and, within half an hour of receiving it, Sir Harold sent orders to his captain to make all sail.

"Where to?" demanded the captain.

The steward went down to inquire, but came up again in double-quick time.

"Where you like," he muttered, "so it's

away from this cursed island; and I am not sure if he did not say, 'to the devil!'"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the captain.

"It will be that letter he got; he is in a rare tantrum, and there's not a bit of the letter left as big as the tip of my finger."

"Well, the hotter the passion, the sooner it is over; so I'll obey orders to weigh, and get away from the island. May be, by six bells he will know his own mind."

Sir Harold's guests were much surprised to find on rising, that they were many miles from land, and that he did not appear out of his cabin; but as they were nothing loth for a longer voyage, the two facts concerned them very little.

Meantime a rumour reached Cowes that "the Marguerite" had put into Newtown. Basil and Gerald posted off there without a moment's delay. They arrived in time to see "the Marguerite" just disappearing on the horizon.

"Let us haste back," said Basil; "'the

Ripple' is ready for sea, we may hope to overtake her."

"The screw yacht," said a sailor, on hearing him, "has very little coal on board, she can't go far."

"How do you know?" asked Gerald.

"Some of the crew were ashore last night, and said as how they meant only to coast round the island; they took in fresh stores for a day or two."

No time was lost, Gerald out-did Basil in his exertions; and by noon, they were well out to sea.

"We are going to have a dirty night of it," said the captain of the "Ripple" to Basil.

"Care for nought, so you overtake 'the Marguerite,'" was the reply.

"What course was she taking? for we might miss her in the night."

"What! cannot we come up with her before night?" exclaimed Gerald.

"She had six hours' start, sir, and we have not sighted her yet. If you could tell me

whither she was bound, I might be able to form a judgment."

"That I cannot tell; she seemed to have gone off suddenly, without a purpose, making for the coast of Holland."

"If the wind keeps on this tack, and she is short of coal, she must about-ship. No sea-going captain will trust his craft, in dirty weather, too near the coast of Holland. The shoals there, soon swallow their prey."

"Do you know anything of the captain of 'the Marguerite?'"

"Nothing, my lord; he was just taken at a venture, Sir Harold was in such a hurry to be off."

"I cannot think," said Basil, pacing uneasily up and down his little deck, "what caused Harold to go again in such a hurry; could he have heard any of the rumours at Newtown? It is just like him to take the pet, and go off again in a tangent."

"Ha!" said Gerald, "a thought strikes me—his mother wrote to him; I remember she boasted to me of having done so. He

has received it, and here, here is the panacea for all he might feel, now in my possession. Not an hour of the time since it was given me have I failed to feel that it was safe, ready to put into Harold's hand the moment I saw him."

"Your conjecture must be right," answered Basil; "he has received his mother's letter, and none from Margaret. Poor Harold!"

"We pursue at every risk?" demanded Gerald.

"Yes," responded Basil; "one hundred pounds shall be divided among you the hour I board 'the Marguerite,'" continued he, turning to his crew.

"Ay, ay, my lord," they answered; "we'll work with a will."

Low and gloomy clouds gathered themselves in large masses, rolling and unfolding under the very rays of the setting sun. A hollow wind seemed to sweep over the sea, whistling shrill as it caught the light spars of "the Ripple" in its grasp, or sent the crests

of the waves in briny showers over the anxious watchers.

A deep and mighty spirit seemed moving the ocean, whose bosom swelled so high; the little, light vessel was now borne on some great billow, and again sunk deep in a valley of waters.

"I am glad I left my boys at home," said Basil to himself.

"God love my Millicent!" was Gerald's prayer.

CHAPTER XX.

Philip Leigh took Lotty to Paris at first. And if he had purposely wished to make the affectionate and anxious Beauvillians know that "their girl" was happy, he could not have taken a better course.

Lotty was delighted. The beauty of the public buildings, the fresh, clear air, free from all smoke, the clean and new appearance of everything, charmed her correct eye, and good taste.

With a mind so constituted, that she found food and amusement for it in the smallest daisy, the lightest cloud, the narrowest space; it was not to be wondered at, that Lotty

drank in largely, with keen enjoyment, the sights and sounds with which she was now surrounded.

Had Philip's mind been in a less morbid condition, it must have been both charmed and elevated by thus associating with one so fresh and intelligent.

The unerring judgment with which she fixed at once upon the most correct building, the finest pictures, and the most beautiful statues, while it rivetted the chains of admiration Philip felt for her, awoke no happier, or more genial mood in his breast.

She was not to be happy but through him; she was to see with his eyes, hear with his ears, speak with his mouth. And yet he acknowledged to himself, that it was her free, independent mind; her noble, truthful heart; her frank, happy temper, that made her so adorable to him. And how was he to make two such incongruities meet?

He would try a new plan.

"Why do you go so often to see that one picture?" said he, one day, to Lotty, as he

found her in her usual place before the "Assumption of the Virgin Mary."

"It does me good to look at that face, Philip," she answered.

"I do not see anything very particular about it in point of beauty. The faces of the children seem to me more lovely."

"But it is the expression, Philip, so pure, so devoted, so self-forgotten. It is so like Margaret."

"Ha!" said Philip, "I thought you had a reason for such admiration of this picture. Lotty! we leave Paris to-morrow."

"Very well, Philip."

Once, when a younger man, Philip had resided for some months in an old chateau in the forest of Ardennes; partly that he might, unmolested, study the French language, and partly that he might have the relaxation of some species of sport.

The chateau was old, gloomy, and damp, in the heart of the forest. A farmer and his wife, with one servant, lived in it, when Philip was there. If the same people inhabited it

now, Philip could have no reason to doubt that Lotty would find any society so congenial to her as his own. Surely, in lonely solitude, nothing could come between him and her love.

He took the chateau for the three autumn months; and Lotty went at once from the fair city of Paris, with its palaces, and countless luxuries, to a tumble-down, old chateau, that smelt of green, damp, mouldy cheese, and fusty mice.

No one dwelt within three leagues of the place. So Philip set himself steadily to watch for a change in that cheerful spirit.

A week passed.

"Oh! Philip," said she, at the end of it, "you must come with me to-day, that I may show you the most magnificent Spanish chesnut-tree I ever beheld. Bear and I discovered it this morning, and we gathered chesnuts by the thousand. Do you know, Philip, old Aimée makes bread of these chesnuts. She is going to teach me to do it some day."

"I thought that sour, old dame spoke to no one," said Philip.

"She is not at all sour, Philip, she is very kind to me. I have been helping every morning to milk those poor, miserable, thin, old cows; and I have enjoyed giving her an account of ours. Ah! Philip, she was so infinitely amusing in her wonder."

"How do you make her understand you? She has the most outrageous patois I ever heard."

"I put a great quantity of Gloucester dialect into my French, and we get on wonderfully."

They went to see the great chesnut-tree.

"What an age it must be, Philip; I should like to take some of the young ones, sprouting about here, home. I think an avenue of Spanish chesnuts would be beautiful. Don't you, Bear?"

Bear agreeing, they both set off for a race, and her sweet laughter rang through the forest. At the end of another week, Lotty was very full of business.

"That old Gerard is getting in his harvest, and wants the girl, so I am going to cook the dinner and act maid; and you must not scold, Philip, or perhaps the new maid will turn sulky, and not wait upon you."

She looked so fresh and pretty, his eyes followed every movement, though he said nothing. Clearly there was no taming her this way. Hard as the trial was to him, and bitterly as he punished himself, he determined to plead a sudden recal home, and leave her there by herself.

They only received a post once a week. Upon the receipt of the next one, he would act upon this thought. He did so.

"Then," said Lotty, "Bear, you and I must go and get the chesnuts up. Do you mind taking them home, Philip?"

"No, he did not care;" in fact, at that moment, all he cared for, was one look of disturbance or disappointment in her eyes. There was none.

He went; and that her eyes looked wistfully after him, he felt certain. The exquisite

delight of this thought kept up his spirits for full ten days. Not that he went to England, or intended to do so — he was but at the post-town contiguous to the old chateau.

In about a fortnight he became painfully anxious to see that bright face again; not that he expected it to look bright—he hoped it would be pale and sad, and only brighten when it saw him. But it was rather too soon as yet; so he went to Paris for a few days, to consult a doctor about his heart, which he again felt uncomfortable.

During that time, he learnt not only from the English papers, but from home, the sad history of Court Leigh.

His first thought was, how glad he felt that he had taken Lotty from home before Lady Leigh's illness. She would have thought him a brute to have refused her kind cares and consolations at such a time.

His second thought took the form of a species of pleasure, that Lady Leigh should be thus hurt in the tenderest point. He had

long owed her a grudge for her insensibility to his attractions. Now he was revenged.

His third thought dwelt upon his cousin. If he had been a fool (which was all the blame he attached to such crimes), it was nothing to him, Philip Leigh. It only gave him a greater probability of succeeding to the title he had so long coveted.

So, with all the letters and papers in his pockets to show Lotty, he retraced his steps to the old chateau, the agitation of his heart increasing the nearer he approached.

A double dose of the soothing tincture prescribed by his Paris doctor, was necessary to calm his agitation. As he drove into the old court, no one appeared to welcome him; he had half fondly fancied such might be the case. He left the carriage with his hand on his side. Though unlocked, the house was empty. No farmer, no Aimèe, no servants. It was well for his nerves that he recollected, probably at this time of the year they were all out in the fields, and it was clearly his

own fault giving them no timely notice of his coming.

Bidding the driver put up his horses as best he could, and promising him some refreshment, he passed on to the rooms he inhabited with Lotty. All scrupulously neat and clean, but cold and bare ; no fires, no sign of them, nothing lying about, as if she had been lately there. For a moment his heart stopped beating. Had she gone? Had the solitude proved too much for that happy, congenial spirit, which loved to bask itself in the hearts of kindred and people? He lay still and quiet for a few moments to recover himself, and then passed on to her bedroom. He leant for support against the door, as he saw a little dress hanging on the back of a chair, with many other signs of her presence ; the windows wide open, letting in the cool autumn breeze, with the early dead leaves rustling in with it. Lotty herself spoke, in all the neat arrangements of the room. In a small ante-chamber beyond, there were even later marks of her having been there.

A letter was on her desk, unsealed, directed to her brother Norman; some blocks of wood were lying about, with chips and shavings, two penknives, and a file; and on the table was a half-finished, but most spirited likeness of Bear, carved in wood. Rejoiced as he was to be certified that she must have been there that morning, he would have been glad to see disorder, the unmistakable mark of neglect and indifference.

She was not idle, either. Philip gazed with admiration on various rough drawings, representing different things, and from which he now perceived carvings were being made in soft wood, in different stages of completion, but all beautiful and true to nature. His heart being at ease from its first fear, and thinking, from Lotty's habits, she was sure to be in the fields with the people of the house, he proceeded to ransack the cupboards for food, both for himself and the man.

Nothing could he find but part of a loaf, of black barley bread.

There was nothing for it but to go in search

of some one. He soon found the people, but Lotty was not with them—she had gone, as they supposed, to the great chesnut-tree with Bear. He took his way slowly to the place. As he neared it, he went with a lighter step—he wished to see her before she caught sight of him. His heart thrilled with a strange sensation, and he stopped to calm it. He heard her low, sweet voice, singing the soft murmuring song, he had never heard from her since she had sat on the arm of her father's chair.

When he could look, the little fairy thing was on her knees piling up a faggot of sticks, which she broke and placed deftly on the heap before her. And as she sang, she heaped some dry leaves out of her lap on to the whole; then lighting the pile, she put stick after stick on to the burning mass, until she had a bright fire before her, and it crackled, blazed, and sputtered, to the sweet song ringing from her heart.

Presently the fire seemed in the proper state for her fancy, and she spread about the hot ashes, putting in handfuls of chesnuts. Then

she called aloud, "Bear! Bear! where are you, idle fellow?" And shortly Bear made his appearance, with a rabbit in his mouth.

"Now, Bear, give it to me. Bear is a gentleman—he does not eat raw meat like a wolf, but waits until Lotty cooks his dinner. Well, what is it, my Bear, what disturbs you, somebody coming? No one that will hurt us, Bear, I know. What, still uneasy; has Philip come? Well! then, let us welcome him." So she left her fire and occupation, and came to where Philip was standing.

"How do you do, Philip? how are all at home?"

He drew her towards him, with a strange sad feeling in his heart, that expressed itself in his face.

"Are you ill, Philip?" And her eyes looked up anxiously into his.

"No, Lotty, I was afraid I might have found you but dull and melancholy, leaving you so long alone."

"Dull? oh! no, Philip, do not think thus, we don't know what it is to be dull."

"But what are you doing here with that fire, and why do you permit Bear to destroy the game?"

"It is his dinner, Philip—he has nothing else to live upon."

"I always thought he had the same as you have."

"Yes, in general; but he cannot eat chesnuts."

"Child, do you mean that you dine on chesnuts?—is that your dinner preparing now?"

"Yes, Philip, you left us no money."

"My Lotty, my poor Lotty!—but why did you not order what you wanted? Would these rascally people not trust you?"

"Oh! yes, I might have had what I liked; but do not vex yourself, Philip, I never was better, and I have really not felt a single want."

"But why, why could you be so silly, Lotty? you knew it would make me very angry."

"I did not think you would ever know it, Philip. If you returned—"

"If I returned, Lotty?"

"Yes, I did not know that you would; there was nothing that I knew of, to make you remain with me. You seem to take no pleasure in my society."

He interrupted her with an exclamation. This to him who felt as if dead when away from her.

"Well, eat your dinner. I should like to see how you and Bear manage," he gasped out at last.

"Come then, and lie down here. You see my chesnuts are just done, and I break them up into this pot of cream, for I earn this by milking the cows in the morning. Now, taste, Philip, is it not good?"

He assented, at the same time, adding, "But not for the only dinner one has."

"But do you know, Philip, people now-a-days eat far too much. One thing is quite enough for dinner, and if you were accustomed to one thing, you would shortly be surprised at ever having given yourself up to such gluttony as two." And she laughed her pretty, hearty laugh, because, as she declared,

Bear was looking so cross, that she was caring for Philip, and not him.

"I always tell Bear he is not to eat his dinner raw, but to bring it to me to be cooked, that he may show he is a gentleman born; and do you know, Philip, one day he brought me a young pig: I did not know what to do."

Thus as she ate her chesnuts and cream, did she chatter in happy glee, such as he had hardly ever seen before in her. Was it to mock him? No, for on arriving at home, and talking with old Aimèe, he soon discovered enough to know she had been neither dull nor moped.

"Ah!" said the old woman, in her patois, "she is a fairy, a child angel; she is good, she is pretty, she is wise, she is not human, she is not of our natures. All things love her, all grows to her hand, . She would not let me buy her food; no, she said, the great Father gave her head and her two hands. Other people worked for food, why should not she? and she grows brighter and more lovely each day; but she will buy for others. She makes

her fine wooden dogs, and her pretty wooden houses, and I must have one to sell, to buy me my warm jacket, and Gerard must have one to sell, to buy him a new blouse. And who is not better for the fairy child? And she reads the Holy Book, and no one can do ill, when she is by. Babette is not heedless and pert, Gerard is good and kind, and I think to myself,—"Aimée, let not the child-angel see you have cross words on your tongue."

So Philip had absented himself for nothing, nay, rather to find that she was more happy without than with him; but all the sorrow he wished her to have felt, all the grief and trouble he meant to find her in, now fell upon her. She was broken-hearted for her Margaret.

Never since the death of her father, had he seen her so moved. And if he had not been jealous and angry, that all this sorrow was for Margaret, and not for him, he must have contrasted the fine, noble energy with which she vindicated Harold, with the cold, selfish thoughts that had filled his own heart.

She besought him to let her go to Margaret. "He did not see any need," he said, "in granting her petition. Margaret had sufficient people to console her, without Lotty."

CHAPTER XXI.

Fourteen days and nights did the buoyant little "Ripple" contend with the boisterous elements. Fourteen days did Basil and Gerald see rise with hope, and fourteen nights close with despair. Not once had they caught a glimpse of the "Marguerite."

Their own peril had been great. Cruising as near the coast of Holland as they dared, they had been spectators of more than one vessel disappearing in those treacherous sands, without the power to assist. Nothing but the light draught of the "Ripple" saved them; now they were necessitated to turn homewards. They were already on short allowance, and

had barely enough to last three days. Nothing was to be gained by cruising longer, at this period of the year; the best thing they could do, was to return to England, for if any intelligence was to be had, it would, of course, be known there first.

Reluctantly, but with speed, they returned. It was not until safe in Cowes harbour, that their Captain gave voice to his fears.

"I never thought to see Cowes again. If this had not been a wonderful little boat, we should none of us have seen this spot again."

"Have we been in such danger then?"

"Never nearer our last end more than once, my lord."

"And the 'Marguerite?'"

The Captain shook his head.

"How, you do not think she has been in danger? Remember her size."

"I have been scanning the harbour, my lord, the last hour, and I can see nothing like her."

"But did you expect her back in port?"

"Aye, my lord! if it was but a pet that

took Sir Harold off, he would have returned ere this, with such a parcel of ladies on board. Remember, it blew a gale every day we have been out."

"'Tis true, we have had shocking weather."

"I did not think to tell you my suspicions, my lord, until I was sure she had not returned to harbour, but—" he paused. "Do you remember the Thursday night, when we were so nearly lost ourselves?"

"I do."

"And the vessel that burnt the blue lights so long, ere she finally heeled over, and was swallowed up?"

"Yes, yes."

"You went below, my lord, unable to bear the sight. I heard women's shrieks amid the gusts of the wind and the roar of waters; you remember, Mr. Herbert, we never sighted the ship well, and I told you then, she was more like the vessel we wanted than any I had yet seen, as far as I could judge."

"Nay, nay, for Heaven's sake, forbear! in mercy speak no more!"

" Well, well, if any of the party are home, which they ought to be by now, or heard of, for few ladies would have stayed out this fortnight, all is right."

With a dread fear knocking at their hearts, they hastened ashore. Not one of all the ill-fated crew of the " Marguerite" had been even heard of, since they departed.

There were letters from Millicent, and Lady Katherine, with the joyful news that Margaret was out of danger, and had had a letter from her Harold, dated Jersey.

Though to Basil and Gerald this gave no great hope, for they knew it must have been written the first trip, yet it seemed to have had all the effect of a healing balm on the fair head so heavily tried. While the penitent and self-upbraiding Lady Katherine wrote imploring letters for pardon to Harold, and she besought Gerald's and Lord Erlscourt's kind offices to obtain it from her injured son.

They did not dare to write in answer. It was less pain to leave them still in ignorance,

than to dash their confiding hopes with suspicion.

They returned to the "Ripple." The Captain had not been idle either in his inquiries, and his face showed but too correctly how his fears predominated.

"You see, my Lord, everything tells against our wishes. She had but little coal on board, and it is the worst of those vessels, half one-thing and half another, in cases of emergency, sail and steam are both wanted; for she is but half-rigged, on account of relying on her screw. Thus, if she drifted on to the sands, her sails would be of little use to get a craft of that size off the current-way; and, unless she could use her screw, her fate would be inevitable. A handy, sharp captain would burn everything he could lay hands on to keep her going, even if he gutted the ship; but I can learn no good tidings of the captain of the 'Marguerite.' If he is not a shore-going captain, he is even something worse. God might have been merciful and spared her; but all that Thursday night nothing could hinder me from

thinking that the very vessel we were pursuing, at the risk of our lives, was sinking, almost within hail, into these terrible quicksands."

"Dreadful!—this is too horrible to think of!" exclaimed Gerald.

"Something must be done," said Basil. "I cannot live on here, with such a load on my heart, and do nothing. Advise us, Captain."

"Advise, my Lord—what can I say? Time will only tell the tale."

"We must return, then, and visit those sandbanks; a trace may be found, a something to show that we must hope no more."

"We might do that," mused the Captain. "We must hire a strong steamer."

"Agreed," said Basil, eagerly; "do it to-day."

"And you, Gerald, will return home; one of us must be on the spot, if—if—"

Uncontrollable emotion overcame them both.

By night-time Basil was gone in a stout steam-tug, accompanied by the Captain; while,

at the same time, Gerald took his mournful journey home.

It was well he had but Millicent to encounter at first. To her he told the history of their perilous and fruitless voyage; to her he whispered the direful suspicions of the fate of the "Marguerite."

"It will kill them!—it will kill them both!" cried the tender Millicent, wringing her hands. "Oh, God, avert from my Margaret a blow so heavy! And Lady Katherine, Gerald!—when she knows it was her letter—when she feels it was her doing—ah, merciful heaven, spare us!—spare us!"

It was fortunate that Margaret was still too ill to see Gerald; nevertheless, as another fortnight passed, and still no tidings, and Lady Katherine and Pru. detailed how ill was Gerald, how altered, and wretched, Margaret felt a shock. The suspicion grew strong—he knew more than she did.

As if by accident, she caused herself to be carried into the room, when he came to make his daily inquiries. One look was sufficient.

"You know more than you tell us, Gerald: speak!"

It was impossible to resist. Life and death seemed dependent on the command. He hesitated, faltered, and grew white.

"Tell her all," said Millicent; "it must be told soon."

To Margaret's well-disciplined mind there seemed at once a clue given her to a mystery she could not otherwise clear up. Her heart had mourned cruelly over the fact, that Harold must have known how near her hour of danger was, and yet had suffered a month to elapse without making the slightest inquiry after her. With joyful alacrity she welcomed the dispersion of this most harrowing fact, and, forgetting Lady Katherine's presence, said, quickly, "Ah, yes! My Harold was suspected, accused, upbraided: he will not return until fully acquitted."

"Oh, Margaret, Margaret, upbraid me not!" cried the poor mother. "I have lost my son —my only son, Harold!"

"What said you in the letter, mother?" asked Margaret.

Between sobs and tears, Lady Katherine gave them a description of its contents.

Margaret sighed deeply as the harsh and unnatural sentences smote on her ear. "No wonder—no wonder that he comes not, for he did not receive mine!"

"No," answered Gerald. "I left it at the post-office, Cowes. If I had done that at first, Harold would have received both together."

"It is fatality," said Margaret. But Lady Katherine's nerves gave way; she could bear up no longer against her painful thoughts; and falling into hysterics, had a practical illustration of the sort of demon that had possessed poor Pru. on her sister's wedding-day.

Another fortnight passed. Like the pale being of another world, Margaret moved among them.

One evening Millicent said to her husband, "A shadow has fallen on the window now for the third time. See!—it is Basil!"

Gerald sprung out; for a moment Basil

turned away; then his face revealed the fatal truth; but he could not find voice to say—

"It was even as our captain said; the 'Marguerite' perished on that Thursday night, within hail of us, and not a soul on board survived her."

Who was to tell the fond wife, the loving Margaret? They sat all three through the night, wondering how it was to be done, and, as the morning dawned, they wondered still.

"We must go to Rose-Leigh first," was all that Millicent could advise. "We must not care for the shock it may be to Lady Katherine, for, by that means only, can we hope Margaret will exert herself."

"You are right, Milly," said her brother. "That sweet, gentle spirit will calm her own sorrow, not to add by a single pang to one deservedly afflicted."

They entered the drawing-room at Rose-Leigh; Lady Katherine was moving restlessly about, as was her habit within the last few

weeks. Basil laid down before her, without a word, a glove saturated with salt-water, a neckerchief impregnated with sand, part of a coat with the sea-weed yet on it.

"I found these," he said, slowly, "on a sand-bank, off the coast of Holland, with many other things: say, did they belong to your son or no?"

With a cry that pierced the air with its agony, Lady Katherine caught up the well-known neckerchief; one shriek followed another in quick succession, mixed with piteous cries for her son. A wild and frantic spirit seemed to possess her, and, alarmed for her life or reason, Basil was about to speak. But as he looked up, a vision at the window appalled him. Unconscious that she was entering at the window, as he placed the sad mementos of her drowned Harold before his mother's eyes, he knew not that Margaret saw it all. Lady Katherine's eyes followed his.

"He is dead, drowned, and I murdered him! I, his mother, murdered my son—my

only son! Away!—look not at me!—touch me not!"

The white, stricken vision came swiftly to the frantic mother, and put her arms round her.

"Mother," said the low, sad voice, "if our Harold is dead, he is safe with God."

CHAPTER XXII.

After Philip's determination not to let Lotty go to Margaret, a change came over his wife. She neither sang nor laughed, and she never voluntarily spoke to him.

"No matter," thought he, "I will tame her yet."

When the three months were over, he settled that they should go from town to town, and place to place, until he could fix upon a convenient spot in which to winter.

The grief of Aimèe, Gerard, and Babette was loud and shrill. The angel child was about to leave them; nothing would prosper with them again.

Lotty comforted the old woman as well as she could, and her last words were,—"We hope to reach the same heaven, Aimèe; we may meet there."

"God and the Holy Virgin grant it!" said Aimèe; and for fear she should not be worthy to meet the child-angel in heaven, mother Aimèe mended her ways and speech considerably, and grew a kind-hearted, respected old dame.

Philip, at last, settled that Homberg should be their winter residence. He had been there before, for a year or two, had indulged in some excitement at the gaming tables, and had made a few disreputable acquaintances.

It was here Lotty should undergo her last trial, as Philip thought. She always wrote once a week to her relations: Philip had at first remonstrated upon this, but she said quietly, "If I don't write, a tribe of Beauvillians will take flight after us."

He felt the truth of this. Once or twice he had the meanness to read her letters, especially that one he found open on her desk,

when he returned from his feigned journey to England. He was properly punished whenever he did so, by finding his name not even mentioned in them. Nothing but happy, innocent details of her life; what she and Bear did and saw.

Philip knew Lotty did not like being shut up in a town, so he took a house in a nasty street; and knowing that she would not venture out after her early morning walk, he always left her as soon as she came in, to go to the gaming tables, from whence he returned at all hours.

Lotty never complained. She and Bear seemed to be leading very comfortable lives. Philip said he had lost a great deal of money, and could not afford this, that, and the other; so they did without, not he at least, for he had all the luxuries he required at the *cafés;* only Bear and Lotty were put on such short commons that Philip found out Lotty spent her hours in drawing, and disposed of them to get food.

Oh, loving Beauvillians! if you had but

seen your girl, all the milk of human kindness flowing so generously from your large hearts, would have turned at once into a lake of burning indignation.

One day, at a gaming-table, Philip's ears were attracted by the conversation of a French count and a German baron.

"Always attended by a large blood-hound," were the words he heard.

"Yes," said the Baron, "and her eyes are lustrous as stars; but she is very *petite*—a child."

"I spoke to her," said the Count, "and as she answered politely to my question concerning the road, I thought to pursue my advantage; but when she found my purpose, those lustrous eyes flashed, and she said 'Bar,' and the great hound came, his bristles all erect, and his fangs exposed. *Ma foi!* it needed but that child's voice, and I should have been minced."

"Ha, ha!" said the Baron, "afraid of the hound; I should have kicked him, and sent him howling; but is she not a child?"

"No, no child; a queen could not have looked more stately."

"I shall meet her to-morrow," said the Baron; "her beauty is surprising—but such an hour! I must go straight from here, to be early enough."

Philip went home, boiling with rage. He poured out his anger and disgust to Lotty, demanding why she had not told him.

"I cannot lose my early walk, and if it is supposed that I live here with no protector but my dog, is that my fault, Philip?"

"It is your fault; you drive me from you, because you will not love me as I wish."

"Do you try to make me love you, Philip?"

"If you do not love me," said he, evasively, "you shall fear me."

"Fear!" said Lotty, her slight figure drawn up, her lip curling in scorn.

"Do you dare me?" he said fiercely.

She did not answer.

"Do you mean to say I cannot make you fear me?"

"I fear but one thing in the world."

"And what is that?"

"That I may not do my duty."

He could not but believe her; truth spoke in every gesture. At last he said sullenly,—"If you walk out between four and six in the public and most frequented walks, I will take care to be there also, either with you, or near you"

"Thank you, Philip."

He meant but to try her still.

Attended by her dog, she went. Philip was there before her, talking loudly and gaily to a very handsome Frenchwoman. Lotty passed quietly on, walking from one shaded walk to the other, attracting every eye, but not seeming to care for it Bear; with discreet tail and ears, walking in a stately manner by her.

After their walk, when they reached home, they had a long conference together, and mutually agreed that the change was very disagreeable.

"It is sad, Bear, that we are not still in the forest, that we may not run about and do as

we like, without so many eyes upon us; still we are not so sad as Queen Margaret. Ah! if we were with her, Bear, we should not care for rude eyes and hard fare. We should think of nothing but her. At all events, Bear, you agree with me still; it's better to be poor Lotty and dull Bear, than Carry or Flo. So we will write again to sweet Meg, and comfort ourselves."

Again Lotty and Bear went out to the public walks, as Philip had ordered, at the hour he appointed, and again he appeared with the handsome Frenchwoman.

Lotty and Bear to-day made the acquaintance of a good old bonne, and her merry children. Bear did a wonderful amount of tricks to amuse them.

So that on the third day they proceeded to the public walks, in rather better spirits—they hoped to meet their friends again. The old bonne's face beamed with pleasure, as she saw the little figure with the great Bear appear. She took her for a child, and became so familiar as to say, "Always, *mon enfant*, come and

place yourself under my care—I will be your bonne."

So Lotty and Bear enjoyed themselves. Philip was invariably there ; and though Lotty attracted great attention, nothing had occured to call forth any interference on his part, as her natural protector. Besides, since she had placed herself under the surveillance of the good bonne, many people imagined she was the proper charge of the worthy creature.

"One day," said the bonne to Lotty, "I overheard, *mon enfant*, those two talking, that lady and the English gentleman. The lady is going to speak to you the first opportunity, and make your acquaintance. *Ma chère*, you must not permit it, she is not for such as you to speak to. She is Madame La Luce, very wicked and bad, for all her handsome appearance. That young Englishman is infatuated, he will be ruined."

The good bonne little imagined she was speaking to the wife of the doomed Englishman.

After her warning, Lotty became aware that

Philip was trying to meet her, in one of the walks by herself, for the purpose of speaking to her; Madame La Luce being with him.

She avoided the *rencontre* with such skill, that at last Philip either grew impatient, or the lady taunted him, for he advanced to Lotty alone one evening, when she was walking with the good bonne.

"Lotty, I wish you to come with me."

"For what purpose, Philip?"

"I wish to introduce you to a lady, a friend of mine. She is in the next walk."

"You must excuse me, I do not wish the introduction."

"I command it," said Philip, passionately.

"And I disobey," said Lotty.

She passed on with the old bonne, leaving him in a whirlwind of emotion.

Did she know whom Madame La Luce was? Could she be jealous? If so, his purpose was accomplished; his last trial successful. He trod on air at the thought.

"*Mon enfant*, the Englishman knows you," said the bonne.

"Yes," said Lotty.

"Your brother, *ma chère*."

"No, my husband."

"*Oh, Mon Dieu! oh, misericorde! oh, mon enfant! jamais. Helas! jamais. Jamais je ne l'aurai cru.* Ah! Mary, mother of God, this child, this *petite, charmante enfant! Ah! ma chère, mon ange, que je suis miserable!*"

Lotty tried to bring her old friend to some little reason; but as there was no possibility of getting her out of her state of surprise and consternation, she returned home.

Lotty had not been there long, before the waiters from a restaurateur's came to the house, and prepared to lay dinner for three. In a little while a fiacre drove to the door, from whence Philip handed Madame La Luce.

Lotty was sitting in a sort of child's attitude in a large, old, carved chair, her curls in an unusually disordered state; but so picturesquely did they fall, that nothing could exceed the prettiness of the picture. She had been having a serious conversation with Bear, and perhaps, in the heat of the argu-

-ment, if they had arrived at one, Lotty had resorted to the Beauvillian habit of running her fingers through her hair. Bear's fine head was resting on the arm of the chair, and his loving eyes were saying all sorts of things to his little mistress. The door opened, and Philip led in Madame de Luce.

"Lotty, I wish to introduce you to Madame La Luce. Madame, my wife, Mrs. Leigh."

Lotty looked up, and Madame made an elaborate curtsey. She was about to speak, when Philip said quickly—

"Lotty, do you not hear?—greet your visitor; she dines with us to-day."

Lotty rose from the chair, and without taking the smallest notice of either of them, called to Bear, and left the room with him.

Philip looked in her face as she passed. There was no look of jealous anger, no passion, no feeling—nothing but an expression of calm contempt.

"Ha! ha!" cried Madame La Luce, with the hissing tone of a woman in a rage; "is this your baby wife? *hein;* but we are the

tragedy queen! Small indeed! but a soul, ha! ha! a soul so large, Monsieur Philip, so big, you cannot have control of that soul. He have baby wife, but she cry loudest."

Madame La Luce would have continued darting forth her fiery stings at Philip, had she not seen that he was white with passion.

"I will make her return," he said; "remain, Madame—she shall return and apologise."

As Philip bounded up the stairs to his wife's room, he had no feeling in his heart but that she should obey him. As he entered the room, Lotty was putting on her walking-dress.

"Where are you going?"

"Away," said Lotty.

"You shall not," and he grasped her arm.

"Bear!" said Lotty. The noble hound sprung to her side; and as Philip relaxed his hold, he knew by the fiery eyes and swift, brushing tail, Bear was in no mood to be trifled with.

"How can you be so foolish, Lotty! I

bring a lady to make your acquaintance, and you conduct yourself in this manner!"

"She is not the person a husband usually introduces to a wife."

"You are jealous, Lotty."

Ah! if she would but allow it, he would lay himself at her feet for forgiveness, and be her slave for ever.

She did not answer, she only looked at him. It was enough, never did look express such contempt at the supposition.

"How know you she is the person you mean?"

"If you can deny it, I am willing to believe you."

He did not dare to do so; she looked so pure and child-like in her reproving way.

"Come, Lotty, she shall go if you do not like her; forget this, and I will send her away."

"A Beauvilliers will submit to everything but insult. You have insulted me, both as a wife and a woman. I have borne everything else, and done my duty to you as fully as you

permitted me. Now I am free. Farewell, Philip Leigh ! I go to my own people. Once more I am Charlotte Beauvilliers."

She did not mean to triumph ; she did not intend to hurt his feelings : but there was such an unconscious delight as she spoke of going to her people, such an air of charmed freedom as she uttered her maiden name, that Philip Leigh fell to the ground, smitten, crushed, with the conviction in his heart, she was lost to him for ever—and that it was the work of his own hands.

She glanced at him as he lay gasping on the floor.

" Bear, be good—Philip is ill."

Bear laid down by Philip's side on the floor, his watchful, excited air giving place to a calm, steadfast gaze on Lotty. She raised Philip's head, his eyes were closed ; she could see the violent beatings of his heart, as it heaved the coat up and down. His struggles for breath were fearful.

" Ring the bell, Bear."

The obedient dog obeyed.

"Go for a doctor—Mr. Leigh is very ill," she said, as the servant answered.

Madame La Luce, wondering, it is supposed, at the commotion up stairs, or at Mr. Leigh's absence, now made her appearance at the door, asking, in her sharp, broken English:

"What is de matter?"

"Mr. Leigh is ill, Madame," said Lotty, calmly.

"Oh *Mon Dieu, il est mort!*" said she, screaming.

"Pray, Madame, calm yourself—your cries make him worse."

With a mighty gasp, that made Philip's words fall from his mouth with startling distinctness, he said, "Go, woman!"

"You go, my dear. I hold Mr. Leigh, he have my care."

"He meant you, Madame," said Lotty, calmly.

"*Mon Dieu!* no, he adore me, he wish me by his side, he old bon friend."

Here Philip's efforts to speak, became agonizing.

"Bear," said Lotty, "turn her out."

Nothing loth, Bear proceeded to perform his orders with so much good will and alacrity, that Madame fled shrieking down the stairs, and flying into the drawing-room, sank into the first chair that came to hand. Bear followed; his low, sharp growls and snapping jaws sounded, and looked awful. But to those who knew him, there was a good-humoured sort of chuckle in his eyes, that plainly showed he meant to be quite the gentleman in all he did, and that he was enjoying the fun greatly.

He walked with stately and solemn step into the drawing-room after Madame, and rearing his huge proportions against the door, he shut it, like any other gentleman. Then choosing a convenient spot before the door, he laid himself down, in a calm sort of contemptuous mood, and Madame saw she was a prisoner.

Though she might have done deeds worthy

of a prison, it never entered into her contemplations that her gaoler would present to her the appearance of the present one. The thought of hysterics had occurred to her, but possibly her strange keeper might take measures to bring her round, never mentioned in the annals of physic, which would prove something so frightfully out of the common, as to be her death.

So she sat trembling in her chair, vowing and protesting to herself that her old admirer, who adored her, should adore at a distance, for never again would she encounter the glance of the child-wife's eyes, or the jaws of her brute, "*si effroyable,*" if once she escaped from the contiguity of either. Never was woman in such a predicament; unable to shriek, to speak, to scold, not daring to move, she sat through what she thought a lifetime of horrors. Once, and once only, with stealthy, slow movement, did she put out her hand to reach the bell-rope.

Just as she thought she grasped it, a short,

sharp growl of intense anger, made her spring out of her chair with fright, and fall into it again with fear. She could just see Bear, and after this mark of his qualities as a gaoler, he was quietly licking his paws. Lotty would have said he was trying to hide a smirk of gratified irony, that came over his grim countenance ; but Madame saw nothing but "*une bête effroyable.*"

Various noises were heard up stairs, running, calling, and every sign of a dark and momentous time.

At the end of an hour, all was quiet, and Bear seemed to know that something pleasant was coming, for he raised himself, his huge tail went to and fro, making a breeze quite refreshing to the half-sick Madame. His eyes assumed a loving, fond look, and as the door opened, he made way.

"Have you behaved like a gentleman, Bear?" said the young girl, as she entered.

Bear rose up to his full height, and putting a paw on each shoulder, looked an unmistakable "yes," into Lotty's eyes. Madame

shrieked, Lotty kissed him between the eyes and said, "Good Bear!" Then with a manner so dignified and courteous, that Madame La Luce's bold eyes drooped before hers, she said, "Mr. Leigh is better, Madame—would you like a *fiacre?*"

"I wish to see him," said Madame La Luce, with poor effrontery.

"The doctor is there, Madame, and he is shortly coming here, to write a prescription."

The fact that this girl, in her woman's delicacy, should try to spare Madame La Luce the shame of being found in a married man's house, awoke no corresponding feeling in that hardened breast.

It was nothing to her—she had no shame left, she would brave it out, if only to hurt the English wife's feeling.

"I shall stay to see M., the doctor, to hear his opinion."

"As you please, Madame; come, Bear." And they left the room, without further notice of Madame. She was rejoiced at the absence of

her strange gaoler, but she wished she had it in her power to daunt that small, proud girl, if but for a moment. It required all the effrontery and boldness she possessed, to face the doctor's astonishment when he saw her.

He was a Scotchman, but had been settled in Homberg many years. The servant had called him instead of a German doctor, thinking the lodgers would prefer their own countryman, especially the little, young wife, who had made her way into their hearts by many acts, such as Lotty was well versed in.

Mr. Laird knew Madame La Luce well, by sight and reputation.

"You here, Madame?"

"Yes, Monsieur; how is your patient?"

"Who is that young girl up stairs, then?"

"I know not, Monsieur."

"Ay, I kenned she was owre young for his wife," said the doctor, musingly.

"How is M. Leigh?"

"Vara ill, Madame, and no fit for company

like yours. Tak my advice, and gang yer ways."

"I am going, *M. le Docteur!* I but wait to hear of my old friend, M. Leigh—he adore me."

"He'll no adore ye long then. If the Lord sends nae better symptoms, he'll no leeve twelve hours."

"Oh, *Mon Dieu! pauvre* M. Leigh! I go, I fly—make my compliments to M. Leigh. *La mort! oh c'est affreuse.*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

When Mr. Laird reached his own house, late at night, after seeing his patient in a calm sleep, and the child, as he called her, sitting by his side, with an old woman in the room, whom he had sent for to assist, he fell into a deep fit of musing.

"My word, Alick, but ye might awa to bed, if ye're ganging to sit mump like that."

Thus said Mrs. Laird, who was also Scotch, and not of a kindly temper, for she mourned over her banishment from the land of cakes and heather.

"Hoot, woman! dinna fash. I hae got a new patient."

"Man or woman, Alick?"

"A young man, and my heart is wae about him—I think he'll die; and he is such a fine, grand, weel-favoured chiel."

"And what's his ill, Alick?"

"Heart complaint, Janet."

"Aye, me, what a mony folks dee of that the noo, Alick. In my young days, heart complaint was joost a fit o' luve."

"Science is mair skilfu' noo, Janet, and kens mony things that were aye hidden afore."

"Is he weel to do, Alick?"

"There seemed no lack, Janet; for when I ca'ed for what I wanted, it aye cam to my hond."

Mr. Laird was very deep; he knew poverty was a great sin in Janet's eyes; and as he was plotting a scheme in his own mind, which, without her consent, he knew could not be done, he was calling up all his craftiness to his aid.

"And so you think he'll dee, Alick?"

"No that, Janet, if I had him under my ain e'e, in the house here—he has nane to look after him."

"And div ye think I'se gwan to have a strange mon in my house?" said Mrs. Laird, wrathfully, and beginning to see the Doctor's drift.

"Then the puir, bonny lad must just dee. Madame la Luce must nurse him."

"Wha?" said Mrs. Laird, panic-struck.

"Did no I tell ye I fund that woman i' the house?"

"Deed o' goodness, Alick! gang yer ways in the morn, and fetch him straight here. I wadna be doing my duty as a countrywoman, did I leeve the bonny lad in her clutches."

"He is no to say a lad," said Mr. Laird.

But Mrs. Laird was so taken up with her own ideas, that she did not heed him. She had brought out with her from her native land a great deal of the old Puritan blood and feelings, for which that land is famous. The unrighteous and ungodly proceedings of "fo-

reign pairts," as she termed it, and the peculiarly "awfu'" state of Homberg in particular, had done much to increase her little acerbities. In railing at them, she had adopted a habit of always railing, because her decorous mind and strict ways were scarcely ever without an affront on them.

Madame La Luce, in particular, was a never-failing source of righteous wrath; and when everything went well in the house—Mr. Laird in high favour, the maids all doing their duty—that abhorred and odious name never failed to upset the whole household, putting Mrs. Laird into a week's ill-humour. In fact, if all the antediluvian animals in a row (and they seem to have been larger and more hideous than postdiluvian), with a flight of dodos (remarkable birds indeed), had met Mrs. Laird in one lane while Madame La Luce was approaching from another, Mrs. Laird would have rushed into the jaws and embraces of the hideous monsters, rather than come into contact with one whose sins made her a greater

monster than any, and whose meretricious beauty appeared in the worthy woman's eyes more frightful than a dodo's ugliness.

"The hussy! the neer-do-well!—ye think ye'll hae yer ain way. Eh, Doctor, but ye mun be up in the morn, and get him awa', puir misguided lad!" exclaimed she, at last, having indulged in various other remarks that would not look well in print, though, no doubt, strictly true.

"There is a bit lass, too," began Mr. Laird.

"Hoot, man! de ye think I can fash mysel' wi' ony more o' your patients?"

"She is nae patient, Janet. I am thinking she'll be sister to yon."

"I am sure there is naebody wha does their duty more according to the blessed commandments nor me; but as for taking in a' your fancies, Doctor, I wunna!"

"Then I'll just gie this up, Janet; and I wadna hae mentioned it till ye, but I feared Madame La Luce might just get haud of the young lassie; and then, puir bairn—"

"Gang yer ways, Doctor, and fetch 'em both. I'll get the blue room ready for the lad, and the lass shall aye sleep in the sma' chamber within my ain. I warrant nae madames will get at her there."

Dr. Laird having gained his ends, thought it prudent to say nothing about the dog. As Madame La Luce could not contaminate him, there was no ruse by which he could obtain a consent for his admittance. He was, in reality, very anxious to have his new patient immediately under his own eye, not only because he feared that the case was a very bad one, but, being in lodgings, Madame La Luce might have constant admittance, and keep his patient in a state of agitation that would go far to retard his cure; for he had seen quite enough to know that he was violently agitated at the bare mention of her name. Besides, his kind heart felt for the little, lonely child, who had showed such judgment and tact in all she had done to assist his professional labours, and whose slight touch and gentle

words seemed to be like balm to his patient. Also, the study of a heart-disease was a peculiar hobby of the good doctor's; therefore, it was not to be wondered at that he fell into a brown study in trying how he could beguile Mrs. Laird into his wishes, and went to bed very well satisfied that he had succeeded.

On the morrow, towards noon, Philip was removed into the doctor's house, with every care and precaution. To do Mrs. Laird justice, when she made up her mind to a thing, she entered into every detail of it, as if the original idea was her own, and had for some time been her sole wish.

She had routed up the good doctor at peep of day; she had cleaned, dusted, and tidied the blue room, though it was perfectly clean and free from dust before; she had prepared several little savoury messes; she received Philip as her own son, and, taking forcible possession of him, she had him placed between the snow-white, homespun linen sheets, and

surrounded him with everything fresh and clean as herself.

She viewed, with great satisfaction, his pale, white face assume a look of pleasure at the change from the dismal lodging to the cheerful, sunny chamber; then, seeing him gaze anxiously around, she said:

"What more want ye?"

"Lotty," said Philip, feebly.

"Here, Philip," said a voice outside; and a little fairy child came and sat at the foot of the bed.

Before Mrs. Laird had time to recover her astonishment, a great dog followed, and lay at her feet.

In her anxiety about Philip, Mrs. Laird had forgotten the existence of the "little lass;" but when the hound followed, and laid himself down as if he were perfectly at home, her wrath overflowed..

"And whatten a beast do you ca' that?" she said, with a vinegar aspect, to Lotty.

"He is a Scotch bloodhound, ma'am," she answered.

"Scotch or not, div ye think I'll allow such a beastie as that in my best chamber?"

"Go down, Bear, and lay by the front door until I come," said Lotty.

Bear got up, and with a meek look of supplication addressed to Mrs. Laird, he slowly departed, with his tail in a dejected and forlorn droop.

Mrs. Laird looked astonished, but said nothing. She followed Bear out, and having apparently watched him, came back with a red face.

"What sort of a dog is yon, that he kens a' ye say, like ony Christian?" said she, to Lotty.

"He is a very good, sensible dog, ma'am. I will take care he shall give no trouble, if you will let him remain."

"I maun judge for mysel' first, afore I mak rash promises."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Weel, noo, if you'll promise to be good and quiet, ye may stop with your brither a bit, while I step for a sup broth."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"What's the matter wi' you, my man?" said Mrs. Laird, seeing a cloud passing over Philip's face.

"She is my wife," said Philip, angrily.

"The Lord be gude to us all!—he is raving."

"No, ma'am," said Lotty. "I am eighteen years old, nearly."

"Oh, doctor, doctor!—come yer ways; here's a tale to tell!" and Mrs. Laird hurried out.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Do you feel more easy, Philip?" said Lotty, after Mrs. Laird's abrupt departure.

"Yes, Lotty, this room is pleasant."

"I must make some arrangements about our lodging and board, Philip; you would not like to be here on charity."

"No, no, of course not. You will find as much money as you want, in my writing-case."

"I may use it all then?"

"Yes, yes, use what you like, take what you like; we can pay liberally, I have enough. But, Lotty, do not leave me."

"I shall not while, you are ill, Philip."

"Thank you."

"Shall I read to you, Philip?"

"Yes; but sit where you are."

Lotty did not read long; for Mrs. Laird having recovered her wits, now brought in the "sup broth."

While administering it, she proceeded to unburden her mind of various matters crowding there—in the foremost of which, was the horror and shock she felt, that with a wife (though but a child) he had suffered himself to get entangled with Madame La Luce.

Philip's face grew flushed, and the bedclothes began to heave.

"Ma'am," said Lotty, "he does not like Madamé La Luce any more than you do."

"At no hand say her name, bairn, it's no fit for the like o' you."

"But you agitate Mr. Leigh, Ma'am, and it was owing to her he had these spasms."

"Oh! Ay! and was that it? Weel, I'll say nae mair. If it wasna his fault, it's no

me as will say ane word more abune the matter. I see the hail thing the noo, and I dinna think it strange that a madam like that should hae been tuke wi' his bonny luiks. Ech! puir bairns, ye hae had a grand miss o' ill, and its weel ye had the good speerit, my man, to thraw Satan behind ye."

"Shall I give him the broth, ma'am?" said Lotty; "you have so much to do."

"Weel, mind now ye dinna give it ow're hot. It's nae mair nor right that ye should learn yer duty as a wife."

And Mrs. Laird departed, without seeing that whatever good her broth might have done, her words were stings to Philip.

"Lotty, Lotty, do you forgive me?"

"Yes, Philip."

"Your simple yes, is to me what a solemn oath would be from another. I may feel it so, may I not, Lotty?"

"Yes, indeed, Philip," said Lotty, touched with his weak and faltering voice.

"I should like to know what feeling

prompts you, Lotty, to hide what you might so truly expose to your own honour and credit?"

"As I hope for mercy myself, Philip, so would I give it others."

"Mercy!" said Philip, echoing her word; "why should you require mercy?"

"We are all sinners before God, Philip, and have all need of mercy."

"And do you believe so truly in a God, Lotty?"

"The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God,'" she answered with solemn emphasis.

Philip coloured, and remained silent for some time.

"Has the doctor said anything to you, Lotty, about my illness? Does he think it will be long before I am better?"

"I do not know, Philip."

"I should like to speak to him when he has time," said Philip.

"Very well, Philip; but now pray try to sleep; the doctor said you were to keep quiet."

"Will you remain where you are?"

"Yes, Philip."

He shut his eyes, and she sat in her child's attitude at the bottom of the bed, reading. And so they remained for an hour, but she knew he did not sleep.

At the end of that time, Mrs. Laird entered.

"Weel, bairn, ye hae been vara quiet. I hae been to the door, peeping through yon chink, and aye seen ye at yer post. So when ye get well, Mr. Leigh, ye'll have to remember she did her best, though she is sae young. But now, bairn, gang ye to the big hound, he joost breaks my heart, ganging by the door-mat; he looks that wistful at me. His een say as well as ony christian, 'Hoo long de ye mean to keep me biding here?' And he'll no stir for ony of us."

"May I bring him up here, ma'am?" said Lotty.

"Nae, bairn, gang yer ways first oot o' the door, and get a bit fresh air, with the big

doggie, and then may be I'll see about letting him go ben the house."

"Shall you want me, Philip?"

"I want you always, Lotty; but go."

"Oh, ay, gang awa; ye wadna, Mr. Leigh, keep a young thing like thon fra the Lord's air. She'll joost gang into the garden, and I'll be sitting in thon chair watching her, to see she gets into nae mischief."

"Can I see her?" said Philip, eagerly.

"No, dinna you stir, I'll tell ye a' the news as I sit. Ech! but, mon, I dinna understand ye. Hardly letting the bairn out o' your sight, and then letting that hussie have speech o' her."

"What is she doing now, Mrs. Laird?"

"Why, she is rinning here, there, and everywhere, and the big doggie is after her, and they are like twa bairns at play. Ay! but it's wonderfu', how he threeps after that bit thing. Has she nae mither, that she gaed that young lass marry you, Mr. Leigh?"

"No, she had no mother."

"I thought so! and ye being, nae doubt, knowledgable, did ye think it wad be a guid purpose o' marriage, to tie that child down in her early years? ye couldna have expected her to be a woman of wife-like pairts."

The hot tears burst from Philip's eyes; they had been gathering long, and Mrs. Laird was for the nonce silent and watchful, in her efforts to calm his agitation.

Though she had many a secret misgiving as to the cause of this bitter weeping on the part of a man who looked as if (in health) he was one of Nature's finest works, she did not like to ask him more questions; but settled in her own mind she would give the thoughtless child-wife many a lecture on the duty of comporting herself discreetly. For such tears could only have been extorted by some heavy domestic disappointment.

In the evening the doctor was closeted long with his patient, and Mrs. Laird took the opportunity of giving her first lecture to

Lotty, whom Philip had desired not to be present.

"I am thinking, my bairn, if ye paid half as much attention to Mr. Leigh, as ye do to yer dog, he wad be better content."

"Did he say so, ma'am?" asked Lotty, quickly.

"Na, he said nothing, but he wept salt tears, and nae man does that wi'out heart's sorrow."

Mrs. Laird perceived with much shock, that Lotty seemed pleased to hear her husband had been weeping.

"Nay, ma'am," said she, in answer to her reproof, "I did not mean to be heartless, but people do not weep unless their hearts are soft and tender."

"But, bairn, if you put on him owre much, nae wonder ye make his heart hard."

"I will try not to put on him then, ma'am," said Lotty.

"That's my gude bairn. May the Lord but please to grant him his health, and ye

will turn out a grand wife yet. But hae ye nae relations, child?"

"Yes, ma'am, of all kinds."

"And has he?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And how cum ye to this heathenish place, no one near ye, and no servants?"

"Philip wished it, ma'am."

"And are ye well off? no that the doctor or me is to say money lovers, and I hae taken ye into my house, and that is just next to taking ye into my heart, and if Philip, as ye call him, but mends, that's a' the recompense Janet Laird wants."

"Philip told me, ma'am, to give you this money; and as we are not poor, he trusts that you will allow us to pay for everything, the same as if you had kindly taken us in as lodgers. But you must suffer me to say, that no money, nothing we can give, will repay you in our thoughts, for this truly Samaritan kindness."

"Bairn, bairn, dinna talk like that! we are

sair wearied living in this evil place, and that makes one fashious; but I had a lad brither, just like your Philip, and my heart warms to him."

"You are very kind, ma'am, and I thank you also for your goodness to Bear, for—for—" here Lotty's voice faltered.

"Say nae mair, the doggie is unco queer, and I think not quite canny, but he is vara welcome, as long as he is discreet. But deed o' goodness, bairn! div ye ken how much money is here?"

"Yes, ma'am, nearly two hundred pounds of English money, and forty-eight pounds in foreign money, and you can have as much more, when you wish it."

"Weel, I'll tak care on it then," said Mrs. Laird, with a sigh.

"Why do you sigh, ma'am?"

"If we had the half o' that, every year, I wad be back in our ain country."

"That is yours, at all events, ma'am," said Lotty.

"Hoot, bairn! mair than twa hundred pounds! It's little ye ken about money; we'll tak what's fitting, just to mak ye feel at hame, but na mair, I can certify."

CHAPTER XXV.

The doctor's face was grave and sad, as he left Philip's room.

"Eh, doctor! but ye dunna think he'll die?"

He shook his head.

"Have you told him?" said Lotty, anxiously looking up into his face.

"I was feared it might hurt him," said the doctor.

"Oh, sir, ought he, should he be permitted to die unprepared? Will you kindly think of this?"

As she spoke, Bear came into the room,

and putting up his paw, tapped her on the arm.

"Philip calls, sir, but if there is no hope, oh! hide it not, for the love of God." And she left the room.

"Deed, Alick, she is no canny, heartless bairn, talking in that way, and joust hearing she may lose her fine winsome husband. And the hound—. Deed, if they gae on this queer way, I'll be demented. And she so sweet spoken too. You may depend on it, Alick, she has broke his heart with coldness."

"But aye body speaks well on her, Janet, and the auld nurse said she had naething to do last night. The young leddy was up at the first word."

"I dinna ken what to mak o' her, Alick, for old Madame Wegel's bonne has been here, a crying after her. But I'll think nae mair, they must gang their ain ways, if they winna seek counsel o' me. But div ye think he'll dee, Alick?"

"Naething but a miracle will save him, Janet."

"I'll just gang to the chink o' the door, may be, he's axing her, and she'll just flit him aff, if she spaks out to him." And Mrs. Laird departed to listen, so that she might make amends for any heartlessness on the part of the little wife; but to say truth, she was labouring under an ungovernable fit of curiosity.

"Lotty, did the doctor tell you nothing about my illness?"

"I had not time to hear more, Philip, than that his opinion was unfavourable."

"Then you will triumph, Lotty. Death will free you for ever from your chain."

"Nay, Philip, talk not so bitterly. Do you think me so base in heart and feeling, as to rejoice in the prospect of your death?"

"Why should you be different from the rest of the world? you hate me, and you will be rid of me."

"I do not hate you, Philip, and never did."

"Ah, Lotty, if I could but think that."

"I could not have married you, Philip, had I not liked you, whatever my father's commands had been; and you were fast gaining my grateful affections, by your forbearance at that time. I wished to love you, Philip, I tried to do so, not only because of his wishes, but the void in my heart at his loss was so aching. But——"

"But what, Lotty? go on, go on; if I had only known that before."

"You did, Philip, I told you. Do you not remember my warning you, that my love was not to be forced, only gained?"

"I remember that conversation well, I have pondered over it often. I determined to make you love me my own way."

"Yes, Philip."

"And, Lotty, did you refuse me your affection, because, in my man's pride, I would take no advice how to win it?"

"No, Philip, that you know is not the case. I love what is good, great, generous, and frank. Did you act thus towards me?"

"I loved but you, Lotty."

"And yourself, Philip."

"Then you mean to insinuate I have wrecked my own happiness."

"I do not insinuate, Philip. What I said so soon after our marriage, I say now. My love was to be won, I pointed out to you the way, which I would not have done to other than my husband. You took the opposite path."

"Whatever path I took, it seems that I, with a love in my heart not equalled by mortal man, am doomed, doomed to an early death, and you—"

"Will pray that you may live, Philip," interrupted Lotty, solemnly.

"Ah," said Philip, eagerly, "is that true? Say it again, my wife."

"Oh, Philip, it is true that your life is in danger; can you think of meeting your God, unprepared, unrepentant?"

"Is that the reason why you would pray for my recovery?"

"Yes, Philip."

"And would you rather that I should live, live, Lotty, to be what I have been to you, perhaps worse, if that can be, than die as you say, 'unprepared to meet your God?'"

"Yes, Philip."

"Come here, and look at me. Ah, matchless eyes in beauty and colour, but glorious in their truth and clearness, look full at me! Could you live on through this long life, separated from all you love, subjected to every trial and indignity, that you so well know can be inflicted upon you, for the hope that you might save a lost soul?"

"Yes, Philip."

"Then your God shall be mine; teach me to pray to Him that whether I live or die, you may have the reward you merit. Lotty, you have conquered."

"Nay, Philip, it was not I who entered the lists: it was one Philip against another. You have conquered yourself; but your heart beats;

if you love Lotty, as you say you do, you will calm yourself at present, and rest."

"If I love Lotty?" murmured Philip. "I thought I did; but I loved my own mad will better. Will you read to me—read the Bible, read that one verse again: 'the fool hath said in his heart there is no God?'"

She placed herself before him, and a lofty, pure expression came over the lovely child-face, as she opened the Holy book, to teach the worldly-wise man.

With unerring judgment she turned from one passage to another. In the glowing language of Isaiah, the attributes of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, the Comforter, were shown to him. Then the fallen, abject state of man. And with voice that thrilled him with its earnestness, she poured forth the ever-living words of David, as he bared his heart, and the heart of every man, before God.

"Ah! Lotty, how true, how just; is it you that speak to me in such language, or is it

meant for me? surely the name of Philip Leigh must be written there. Say it aloud—nay, spare me nothing, for that was, that must have been written solely for me."

"Nay, Philip, be calm; recollect how necessary it is that you refrain from all excitement. Try and sleep now, to-morrow I will read again."

"How do you pray, Lotty? I know you pray every night and morning; I should like to hear you."

Lotty knelt down, and repeated the simple form of prayer with which she concluded each day. It was still much in the same form as when a child at school she used it, and its touching simplicity went through to Philip's heart. She paused a moment, and then whisperingly said his name, with a petition that God would open his eyes, and unseal his heart. It was a prayer he felt she must have repeated daily, and then with solemn earnestness she said the Lord's prayer. He repeated it after her.

"You always say that?" he whispered.

"Always," she answered.

"I thank God for it!" and he fell quietly asleep.

When Lotty left him for a short time, to go to Mrs. Laird, she found that old lady weeping.

"My bairn," she said, "I hae been at the chink in the door, and though I could na hear much, I saw ye open the Holy Book, and I hope God will bless yer labours. I took ye for ane o' a hard heart, but somehoo ye hae mair thought than I kenned, and it wad be a burning sin did that fine laddie die with his sins na forgiven."

"You will help me then, ma'am," said Lotty, taking her hand and kissing it.

"Bless the bonnie bairn!" said Mrs. Laird, folding her in her strong embrace, "I am ready to be spent for ye baith; and hoo it comes about I canna rightly say, for I kenned naething about either on you yestermorn."

"It shows, ma'am, how kind your heart is," said Lotty.

"Weel noo, we maun all gang to bed; it has been a day of wonders, and nae mortal can tell what new thing may hap on the morrow."

CHAPTER XXVI.

In the night, Philip had so severe a return of the spasms, that for several days he lay faint and exhausted, with the damp and the hue of death on his face, and scarcely any perceptible life in him.

Mrs. Laird had no reason to doubt "the bairn's" care for him. It seemed that Philip was sufficiently conscious to refuse all food but what her hand presented, hear no voice save hers, while the good doctor would say,

"That's a wonderful young thing, that bairn wife, she forgets naething; and yet I dinna think she luves her husband as he does her."

"That's what's sending me joost crackit, Alick; such a bonnie fine lad, too, and when I get fashed wi' her steady, cauld ways, wi' nae heart in them, she luiks at me with them stars o' eyes, and I wad joost think her a bit angel, and could love the ground she stands on. And that big doggie, they're a pair on 'em. He is a lying at this minute on ma best parlour door mat, and wad ye believe it, I tak it up stairs mysel, joost for him, for as he wadna leave the bairn, I didna think I could sleep weel if he hadna a saft bed too."

"Ech! Janet, ye had always the kind heart."

"And have ye tell't the lad Philip he canna mend?" said she.

"Aye, Janet, when the spasms was bad, he luiks at me and said, 'Is this death?' and I answered, 'The Lord so wills it.' Then the bairn wife stoopit down, and kissed him on the cheek, and he lookit awfu' at her, and said, 'Do ye this for the first time, because you will soon be free?' 'No, Philip,' said she, 'from

sorrow and pity.' Then went he aff again, worse nor ever, and I did na think, Janet, he wad hae lived till morn."

"Aye! mon, they are past my kenning, wi' their odd ways, as man and wife. First time, indeed! I dinna think I was ever but a discreet, prudent body, but I gav you a wife's kiss on the asking, Alick."

"She is sae young, Janet, and may be, they have na been lang married; I wonder has she written hame. It is time his friends should know, though it may be weeks yet afore the end."

When Philip had so far recovered as to talk and sit up for a few hours of the day, Lotty perceived that a gloomy spirit was in possession of his mind. She had not expected that he would always be in the soft and gentle mood that he was before the last seizure, so her gentle anxiety was nothing daunted.

Mrs. Laird was sitting at the window, in his room, while Lotty was taking her usual run in the garden with Bear.

"Do you see her, Mrs. Laird?" said Philip.

"Yes, she is ganging slowly down the broad path, and the big doggie is sorrowful by her side, and he has getten her little wee hand in his mou."

"Have they had no race together? has she not played with him as usual?"

"Noo, they are joost down-casted, baith on 'em," said Mrs. Laird; "though she is no wife-like in her ways, she has aye a warm heart, Mr. Leigh."

This was a feeler on the part of Mrs. Laird to extract something from Philip, who, however, made no reply.

"She was married owre young, Mr. Leigh, and I dinna think ye kenned how to beguile her into wife's ways."

"Trying to do so has brought me to this pass," he said gloomily, as if to himself.

"I doubt she hasna been canny with him," said Mrs. Laird to herself; "men are sae queer, thinking they are lords of creation, and never deeving there must be leddies too."

"What is she doing now?" said Philip, again.

"She's drooping still mair, and the hound's tail sweeps the ground."

"Then you think she is in sorrow?" said Philip, eagerly.

"It looks vara like it, and to an auld body like me, I dinna luve to see young things greet. Sae, Mr. Leigh, if ye hae onything on your mind, atween her and you, get it settled sune; ye wadna like to die, and leave her so young, wi' a canker in her heart."

"That would more surely be the case if I lived, Mrs. Laird," said Philip, bitterly.

"The rights between you, I canna tell, as ye'll no seek counsel of ane wha is willing to gie it. But ony way, my mon, dinna gang to meet yer Maker wi' an unrepented sin on your heart."

Philip was silent, but his eyes were fixed on the window, as if he tried to catch a glimpse of the garden.

"She faulds her hands and she luiks up to

Heaven; maybe she is sending up a prayer to Heaven for ye, Mr. Leigh," said Mrs. Laird, who, mindful of her promise to Lotty, was endeavouring to fulfil it.

"And do you think there is a being who hears such prayers?" he answered.

"Ech! laddie, speak not so awfu' like. Div ye think the meanest daisy that turns its wee star-face to the sky, graws by chance? or div ye think thon winsome child, whom ye have set up as an idol in yer heart, was man's wark? Can ye see nae signs of a high and wonderful hand in that fair face, that gracious spirit?"

"'Tis true," murmured Philip, "a God only could have formed her. But is he a just God, to bless one with such perfection, and to curse others with such infirmity?"

"Each ane has their gifts, if they wad but see them."

"But each have not the same advantages, the same opportunities given them, of learning their duty."

"As how, Mr. Leigh?"

"I had no early religious training; my parents gave me no instruction or example."

"And wha's the differ, man? The Lord made it up till ye, by gi'eing ye that angel-child in yer braw manhood. Then ye wad be no the waur for thanking Him night and day for such a gift. 'The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.' What He takes in ane away, He gives twafold in another. But dinna greet; I see yer smitten wi' yer ingratitude, and it's weel ye suld be."

It is true Philip was smitten with a sudden awe, inexplicable to him. It seemed as if his heart and soul were filled with a wonder and amazement he had never felt before. The vastness of the creative powers of an all-powerful and unseen God made him feel himself as the merest atom of dust. And yet the beauty, the comprehensiveness, the power of such a Being, filled his senses with a high and elevating feeling, that made him—the proud, the unbending Philip Leigh—wish to adore with the humi-

lity and meekness of a child. An agitation ran through his whole frame, but it seemed at once so delightful, so soothing, that his heart grew calm and his face serene under its influence.

He seemed to realize that he had a Father, a Friend, a Saviour near him, on his pillow, in his heart, and the thirst of a hungry, dying soul came over him.

"Where is my wife?" he said, at last.

"She is sitting on the grass, wi' an open letter on her knee; but she talks to the hound, and whiles he puts a paw on her arm, and whiles he licks her hands, and I'm thinking, like ony Christian, he is trying to comfort her."

"Will you ask her to come to me?"

"Ay, laddie. I need but tap, and she'll be up, like the flitting of a rose-leaf."

"Lotty, will you again read to me?" said Philip, as she appeared.

This time Lotty read out of the Gospels, and as her soft voice said the words of the parable of the Prodigal Son, Philip stretched

out both hands, and said: "'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am not worthy to be called Thy son;' but, forgive me, oh, forgive me!"

"Amen!" said Lotty, solemnly.

From that hour the spirit of a humble child came upon Philip.

He poured forth to Lotty the long-concealed feelings of his heart, the evil tree of envy and malice, that so grew and flourished there. He laid bare the proud, bitter feelings, that prompted him to turn from her loving efforts, and trust only to his own haughty, determined will; and the more that little, slight frame enveloped itself in its own mantle of rectitude and patience, so the more did he determine that it should bend and break to his will.

In everything had he failed: with each trial she seemed but further removed from him after each attempt, but more resolute and conquering.

"And, ah, Lotty!" he continued, one day, "you remember when I returned to the cha-

teau, and you asked me if I had been ill, then, and then only, did a bitter feeling of remorse and despair seize me, and a sense of humiliation appeared to break me down into the dust. But such was my infatuation, such my blind madness, that, with this feeling of despair in my heart, with a whispering in my soul to forbear, to give all up, and wait your own time, your own wishes, I yet determined to make this last trial. 'Twas made, and I lie here on my death-bed!"

Lotty could only bid him be calm; she felt that such remorse was good for him.

"You have had a letter to-day, Lotty," he said.

"Yes; one from Margaret."

"May I hear it?"

"Willingly, Philip."

And, as if her heart was the heart that wrote, Lotty read out the letter, with all the pathos and feeling it deserved.

"No wonder she mourns for you, my Lotty—'her best Lotty;' but you will soon

be with her! Ah, wonderful is this love in woman!—so pure, so constant!—she will not think her Harold guilty. And he is not, Lotty, in this. I can make amends to Harold for many a dark thought—many a wicked wish. She wishes to go to Cowes, does she? to see the rooms he used—the place he trod last. True woman!—and only cares to have his name cleared. It will be. And I think, Lotty, it is reasonable that wish to go to Cowes, for he may have left some papers; you may learn some circumstance that will throw a light on his strange and inexplicable conduct. For if ever a man loved his wife, Harold did, I know. Ah, poor thing!—poor, forlorn, unhappy heart, how you mourn and are weary! Write to her—comfort her, Lotty; tell her you will soon be with her, and that I leave you to her as a legacy—such a legacy as I owe for unloyal thoughts of her, for undue judgment of her character, the first time I saw her. And now send my good doctor to me, while you are absent."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Under the influence of these new feelings, so calm and soothing, Philip's health mended rapidly, so that he was enabled to be taken out for a short airing two or three times.

Mr. Laird had petitioned him to write either to his friends or his wife's, but Philip would not hear of it.

"No, no; I will have no one come between her and me. Let me have her all to myself for the short time you permit me to think I may live."

During this time Lotty had endeavoured, with all her best energies, to lead him on in the path of peace and holiness; and with

wonderful eagerness and thirsting, he drank in every word—every draught she gave him. Such was the influence of his conduct, that Mrs. Laird again elevated him on to the topmost pinnacle of her favour, and no son could have appeared more dear to her, and for no child could she have exerted herself more.

The bairn-wife sank into a second-rate thought, with her big doggie, unless they administered to Philip's comfort.

"I almost think, Lotty," said Philip, one day, "that if I go on improving so much in strength, I may reach home. I long to see my home with the new eyes and heart your God has given me. I dream of it at night, and often think, Lotty, that it would be now to me what it ought to have been before."

"Yes, Philip; and we might ask Mr. and Mrs. Laird to come home with us. She wants to leave this place; and, you know, a medical man was required at Warrington, before we came away, for the new schools and college, and we might get the appointment for him."

"You think of every one, Lotty. In a day or two we will propose it, for there will be less danger attendant on the journey, with the good doctor near; and, besides, should anything occur to me, you will not be alone."

"Then now we will go for a drive, for I see the little vehicle coming up the street. Run, Bear, and bring Philip's hat."

"Ah! Lotty, I gave you that dog, I gave you that one source of happiness."

"You did, Philip, and never was gift more prized, more beloved. Ah! good Bear, Lotty owes you much, that no one but you and Lotty know; and yet, I dare say, we have yet much more for which we shall have to be grateful,"

It was not to be supposed that Madame La Luce would let the rich and handsome young Englishman slip through her fingers without a struggle. Certainly, if any one (Philip himself) had told her, that he but used her services to make his wife jealous, she could not, would not, have believed them.

The thing would have been inexplicable to her. She believed her own charms so irresistible, Philip could be actuated by no other motive than adoration of her. For a short time, understanding from the doctor that he was dying, she had dismissed him from her thoughts, with little difficulty, as dead. Upon hearing, however, that he was better, she cast about in her mind how she should accomplish an interview. So she wrote a note, which, with a handsome bribe, she gave, herself, to one of strict Mrs. Laird's servants, desiring it might be delivered into Mr. Leigh's own hands, quietly.

The foreign servant, delighted even without a bribe, to do a deed she knew her hard and decorous mistress would utterly abhor, executed her task with a tact worthy of Madame La Luce's own maid; Philip was in possession of the letter, without any one but the servant knowing it.

He languidly opened it, and after reading the contents, he called Bear, and gave it to him to play with.

It was a pity Madame La Luce was not a fly on the wall, to see the note upon which she had spent such pathos and sentiment, now crunching into little nasty bits, under the destructive powers of the "bête effroyable."

On the following day, receiving no answer, she sent another note by the post. When Philip saw the hand-writing, he called Bear again, and as if it were Madame La Luce herself, Bear could not, apparently, have derived more satisfaction in tearing the unopened letter into a thousand bits.

Mrs. Laird would have fainted had she known whose hand penned the fragments she so tidily picked up, and put into the fire.

Altogether Bear was favoured with a good many of those notes, of whose contents no one knew anything but himself.

But Madame La Luce, knowing nothing of all this, still flattered herself, and wrote, but was taken greatly by surprise one day, at see-

ing the sick man, whom she supposed too weak to answer her letters, driving out with the young child-wife beside him.

She wrote to express her delight, "si grand, si exquis, si extatique," at his recovery; but as Bear did not tell what was in the letter, of course no one was aware of it.

Still finding that no responses came, Madame grew indignant, then angry, then revengeful, and then cunning. She would make the proud Englishman return to her.

On this day, therefore, when they were driving out, the coachman suddenly stopped, and before either Lotty or Philip could have prevented her, Madame had tripped up the little steps of the carriage, and seated herself opposite to them.

"Drive on," she said, with cool effrontery; which the coachman, already bribed, and in the plot, did.

"Ah! M. Leigh, how *charmèe*, how *enchantee! je suis de vous voir*, and so well, *aussi*, so strong, so lively, so yourself; and

your littel sister, so pretty, so fresh. Ah! *Mon Dieu! quel bonheur inattendu.*"

Philip's eyes flashed, and Lotty saw with alarm, that the blue tint of suppressed passion and rage was gathering round his lips.

"Be calm, Philip," she said, "dear Philip," looking into his face with such genuine anxiety, love, and pity, that he felt she loved him then, and tried to answer her, by pressing her hands with tender force. "We are in the public streets now, dear Philip, and this coachman is bribed. Be calm, dear, until we get into the lane; she cannot hurt me, she shall not hurt you."

"*Ma foi!* I oblige, truly; I much oblige, Miss, your English politesse, oh, so great. Oh! I forget, you Mrs. Leigh, dat lady so ver polite to me one time, she set her great *chien* to me. Ah! *Mon Dieu!* I never forget, so I vill take my littel revenge; ve vill take drive together through de town. Coachman, go all through de town, I wish to be ver civil and polite, so I put on my bonnet

à-la-mode, just from Paris, and all my fine things, to do you honour, M. Leigh."

As she spoke, the carriage began to go up hill, and at a foot's pace. One clear, sweet whistle, and Bear was on the seat by Madame La Luce. Dirty and damp with his run through the wet streets, his great tail went switching over Madame La Luce's face and bonnet, blinding her eyes, and destroying her personal appearance. For a moment, he thought he had been called into the carriage only for a frolic with his dear mistress, but a scream from Madame La Luce changed his whole nature.

Every bristle raised, his eyes becoming blood-red, his fangs glistening, Bear gave a savage growl, and sprang towards her. Lotty threw her arms round him, to restrain him, while Madame uttered shriek after shriek.

"Get out," said Lotty, "I cannot hold him long."

With one spring, Madame jumped; but the coachman having been told to care for no row

in the carriage, had not yet checked his horses, though Madame's shrieks and the dog's growls were beginning to make him think that he had better not obey orders. Therefore she fell with considerable violence on the road.

"Bear, watch Philip," said Lotty, and sprang out to help her. But the coachman, confused and amazed at the extraordinary and unexpected result of the intended drive, and the horses being half unmanageable with the cries and screams, and their being so suddenly checked on the hill, all made him, in some inexplicable manner, back the carriage, so that it went over the prostrate form of Madame La Luce. Some people came up at that moment, attracted by the cries, and leaving them to assist the unhappy woman, Lotty was at Philip's side again in a moment.

"May I wait, Philip, to see if she is much hurt, and to place her in safety?"

He nodded an assent, for he could not

speak, yet Philip was trying to exercise his new feelings, and strove to hide from Lotty the agony he was suffering.

"Are you sure you would not rather go home?"

"Go," said Philip.

They had not to wait long, for one of Madame's own servants came to her rescue and help.

She was not stunned or senseless, for as they lifted her up, she cast a malignant, hateful glance at Philip, and screamed out,—

"You shall have de law, Mr. Leigh, you shall have de prison! you shall be fined for de assault, for de wicked treatment, and dat *béte effroyable* shall be shot."

"Drive home," said Lotty, "and fast."

Deep sighs came from Philip; the cold dew burst from every pore. Lotty could hear the bounding heart beating as if mad from imprisonment; the lips, the eyes, the clear, thin nostrils all blue, dark, death-like blue. Lotty wrung her hands, as if irrepressibly.

"For me," gasped Philip, "for me, she grieves; Lotty, the punishment is just, that this woman should be my death. But thanks to my Father in Heaven, my wife on earth, I die happy."

When the carriage stopped at Mr. Laird's door, whither Bear had gone before, and brought the whole household there with his wild baying, Mr. Laird lifted from Lotty's shoulder the drooping head of a dead man, and bore the lifeless corpse of Philip Leigh into the house, while Mrs. Laird folded the shuddering, pale, panic-stricken Lotty in her sheltering arms, and carried her up to her own bed.

"Dinna greet, my lamb, my bonnie bairn! the doctor aye kenned he wad gang off suddenly; no but what he thought him better, or he wad not hae let ye gang yer lane. Weep a bit, my birdie, and dinna luik so staring like."

"It was so horrible!" murmured Lotty.

"Like enough, my wee bit angel! but he

aye had time to say one word till ye, to bid ye farewell."

"Yes, yes," said Lotty, eagerly, "he said he died happy. But is he dead? are you sure he is dead? oh! let me go to him, he may be calling for me."

"Ye shall come, if it will ease you, my bairn, and may be, it will joost open the tear-drops. Dry eyes in muckle sorrow, is aye a sign o' brain mischief."

She again lifted up the little light form, and carrying her down in her strong arms, she held her tight, while Lotty looked at the fine but lifeless form of her husband, stretched on the bed he had left that morning with renewed signs of life and vigour.

"Philip! Philip!" she said.

No answer, the dead cannot hear.

"Oh! let me down, Mrs. Laird, let me speak close into his ear."

She suffered her to approach.

As Lotty looked at the calm dead face, with the smile of happiness yet lingering on the

lips, speaking again in voiceless words, "I die happy," the tears burst forth in showers.

"Yes, he is dead, he is really dead, he will hear my voice no more, he will never call Lotty again. He said that he died happy, and I, I am happy that he so died. Farewell, Philip, farewell! you will, in God's own time and of His merciful goodness, see the Lotty you loved so strangely, again. Then shall we be as the angels of heaven, and part no more."

Kissing the broad, white, death-stricken brow, Lotty placed herself, like a tired child, in Mrs. Laird's sheltering arms, and said,—"Now take me away and love me, and let me be your child until they come for me."

"My ain sweet bairn! my little pet-lamb!" murmured Mrs. Laird, as she carried the little worn-out frame to her bed again; and covering her up, she saw, with tears of pleasure, that the white lids closed, the sweet face grew calm, the pretty lips red, and the gentle breath went to and fro, with a calm regularity. Lotty

seemed to sleep as the first sleep of a new-born baby, half its dreams in heaven.

While she was yet in this deep slumber, Mr. Laird was called to speak to an officer of justice. With the quiet common-sense peculiar to Scottish character, Mr. Laird heard the official go through a long detail of crimes and assaults committed that day on the person of Madame La Luce, whose deposition having been taken, a warrant was issued by the chief magistrate to take up the body of the offender, and commit him to prison. And Mr. Laird looked at the warrant, and assenting to the officer's remark, that all was apparently perfectly correct, asked quietly what further he wanted.

"I want the offender; I have my officers here, and he must go from hence immediately to prison."

"Mr. Philip Leigh?" said Mr. Laird, enquiringly.

"Yes, Mr. Philip Leigh, immediately, so I will call my assistants."

"There is no occasion," said Mr. Laird, "follow me."

"This was Mr. Leigh," continued Mr. Laird, pointing to the body, stretched out in its death-clothes. "Return to the chief magistrate, and tell him, if necessary, I will call and explain the whole matter to him; but that the chief offender and sinner in this case, is Madame La Luce herself. That fine young man owes his sudden, fearful death to her. What more revenge wants she?"

This conversation took place in the German language; and as Mr. Laird poured forth his words in his strong, sonorous voice, the deep emotions of the day adding a solemn air to their effect, the officer drew back, appalled and speechless.

END OF VOL. II.

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